SYMBOLISM OF THE CROSS

Le Symbolisme de la Croix

René Guénon

Sophia Perennis et Universalis

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To the venerated memory of
ESH-SHEIKH ABDER-RAHMAN ELISH EL-KEBIR
El-Âlim el-Mâlki el-Maghribi
to whom I owe
the first idea of this book

Mesr el-Qâhirah, 1329–1349 H.

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PRELIMINARY REMARK

Sophia Perennis et Universalis is pleased to present this limited edition reprint of René Guénon's *Symbolism of the Cross* as part of its Perennial Wisdom Series. Guénon, the extraordinary French metaphysician of whom Jacob Needleman wrote, in *The Sword of Gnosis*, that "no other modern writer has so effectively communicated the absoluteness of truth...," is gradually being recognized by deeper thinkers as one of the few who have penetrated the cloying veil of the modern age. As an expositor of pure metaphysic and of its application in the science of symbols (or of cosmology, taken in the widest sense), Guénon is also without peer.[1] Still virtually unknown in the English-speaking world (though in print in English off and on since 1928), Guénon has nevertheless been long recognized as a *critère de vérité* by a vanguard of remarkable writers who evince that rare combination: intellectuality and spirituality.[2]

The genres of Guénon's work may be loosely classified as civilizational criticism, metaphysic, and symbology. This division is of course artifical in the end, but the primary thrust of the present work is clearly metaphysical, though contemporary incomprehension of the subject does not pass unnoticed and various symbols are necessarily pressed into service as reference points—how else could the mind be led up the ladder of analogy to pure intellection? *Symbolism of*

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1. Guénon's work was later complemented by Frithjof Schuon, whose expositions unfold at the same vertiginous height, but add an emphasis on the virtues, beauty, and spiritual realization that Guénon devoted less attention to in print—he having had first to clear the ground and lay the indispensable foundation upon which others could later build.

2. Among them Titus Burckhardt, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Marco Pallis, S.H. Nasr, Martin Lings, Huston Smith, and Joseph Epes Brown. Less well-known, or influenced more indirectly, are Philip Sherrard, Gai Eaton, Whitall Perry, William Stoddart, E.F. Schumacher, Mircea Eliade, Elémire Zolla, Thomas Merton, and Jacob Needleman.

the Cross is in fact best considered as a companion volume to Guénon's more general *Multiple States of Being*, which resumes the exposition at a point where the support of symbols has been largely left behind. Guénon's most 'concrete' metaphysical work (if such an expression be permitted), and undoubtedly his *magnum opus* in this genre[3], is *Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta*: 'concrete' in the sense that it takes the human state as its starting point.

Readers who resonate to Guénon's writing, and detect traces of many an 'overtone' as they read, may be interested to know that the new editions of his *The Reign of Quantity* and *East and West* each include extensive biographical information, and that *Sophia Perennis et Universalis* will be publishing shortly a full-length biography by Paul Chacornac (who knew Guénon well), entitled *The Simple Life of René Guénon*. Guénon was the first *chef d'école* of what has come to be called the 'perennialist' or 'traditionalist' school: those who wish to know more about this perspective are invited to contact the publisher for a list of all currently available books on the subject.

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3. Guénon's *magnum opus* in the genre of civilizational criticism in undoubtedly *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times* (related works are *East and West* and *The Crisis of the Modern World*); and in that of symbology (cosmology), the recently published *Fundamental Symbols [The Universal Language of Sacred Science]*. Other books by Guénon available in English are: *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines*, *Lord of the World*, *Studies in Hinduism*, *The Great Triad*, *The Esoterism of Dante*, *Insights into Christian Esoterism*, and *The Metaphysical Principles of the Infinitesimal Calculus* (latter three in press).

PREFACE

As EXPLAINED at the beginning of *Man and his becoming according to the Vedânta*, that work was intended to form the first of a series of studies which, as occasion might demand, would either give a direct account of certain aspects of the Eastern metaphysical doctrines, or else adapt them in such a way as might seem most intelligible and profitable, while always remaining strictly faithful to their spirit. That series of studies had to be shelved for a time, because circumstances called for other works dealing with various contingent applications of these doctrines; but even here, care was taken never to lose sight of those metaphysical principles on which all true traditional teaching solely rests.

In *Man and his becoming*, it was shown how a being such as man is envisaged by a traditional doctrine of a purely metaphysical order. The exposition was confined as closely as possible to the doctrine itself, and any departure was aimed merely at bringing out concordances between that doctrine and other traditional forms. Our works have never purported to remain exclusively within one given traditional form; indeed the acceptance of such a restriction would be extremely difficult in view of the essential unity of tradition underlying the diversity of more or less outward forms, which are really no more than different garments clothing one and the same truth. In general, we have taken the viewpoint of the Hindu doctrines as our central one, for reasons that have been explained elsewhere[1]; but that can be no reason for failing to make use, whenever it seems advisable, of modes of expression drawn from other traditions—always provided, of course, that they are authentic ones, that is, traditions which can be called regular or orthodox, taking those terms in the sense we have explained elsewhere.[2] In the present

[1] *East and West*, pp. 227–228.

[2] *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines*, Part 3, ch. III; *Man and his becoming according to the Vedânta*, ch. I.

book, that will be done even oftener than before, because this time there is no question of keeping to a certain branch of doctrine as found in one given civilization. The purpose of the work is to explain a symbol that is common to almost all traditions, a fact which would seem to indicate its direct attachment to the great primordial Tradition.

In this connection it is necessary to stress from the outset one point of particular importance, in order to dispel certain confusions which are unhappily all too frequent to-day, namely the fundamental difference between "synthesis" and "syncretism". Syncretism consists in assembling from the outside a number of more or less incongruous elements which, when so regarded, can never be truly unified; in short, it is a kind of eclecticism, with all the fragmentariness and incoherence that this always implies. Syncretism, then, is something purely outward and superficial; the elements taken from every quarter and put together in this way can never amount to anything more than borrowings that are incapable of being effectively integrated into a doctrine worthy of the name.

Synthesis, on the other hand, is carried out essentially from within; by this we mean that it properly consists in envisaging things in the unity of their principle, in seeing how they are derived from and dependent on that principle, and thus uniting them, or rather becoming aware of their real unity, by virtue of a wholly inward bond, inherent in what is most profound in their nature.

To apply the above criteria to the present context, syncretism can be recognized wherever one finds elements borrowed from different traditional forms and assembled together without any awareness that there is only one single doctrine, of which these forms are so many different expressions, or so many adaptations to particular conditions related to given circumstances of time and place. In such a case, nothing valid can emerge from the collection; to use a readily comprehensible comparison, we shall get not an organized whole but a formless pile of débris, which is useless because it lacks anything that could give it a unity like that of a living being

or a harmonious building; indeed, the characteristic feature of syncretism, by the very fact of its outwardness, is its inability to achieve such a unity. Synthesis, on the contrary, will exist when one starts from unity itself and never loses sight of it throughout the multiplicity of its manifestations; this moreover implies an ability to see beyond forms, and an awareness of the principial truth which clothes itself in forms in order to express and communicate itself in the measure in which this is possible. Given such awareness, one is at liberty to make use of one or another of those forms, just as one may use different languages to translate the same thought for the benefit of different people; this is what certain traditions symbolically denote as the "gift of tongues".

The concordances between all traditional forms may be said to represent genuine "synonymies"; that is how we regard them, and just as the explanation of certain things may be easier in one language than in another, so one of these forms may be better fitted than others for expounding certain truths and rendering them easier to understand. Hence in each case it is perfectly legitimate to make use of the form which seems the most suitable for the purpose in hand; there is no objection to passing from one form to another, provided one is really aware of their equivalence, which can only be the case if one views them in the light of their common principle. In this way no syncretism will arise; indeed the latter can only be a product of a "profane" outlook which is incompatible with the very idea of the "sacred science" to which these studies exclusively refer.

The cross is a symbol which in its various forms is met with almost everywhere, and from the most remote times; it is therefore far from belonging peculiarly and exclusively to the Christian tradition as some might be tempted to believe. It must even be stated that Christianity, at any rate in its outward and generally known aspect, seems to have somewhat lost sight of the symbolic character of the cross and come to regard it as no longer anything but the sign of a historical event. Actually, these two viewpoints are in no wise mutually exclusive; indeed the second is in a sense a consequence of

the first; but this way of looking at things is so strange to the great majority of people to-day that it deserves dwelling on for a moment in order to avoid possible misunderstandings.

The fact is that people too often tend to think that if a symbolical meaning is admitted, the literal or historical sense must be rejected; such a view can only result from unawareness of the law of correspondence which is the very foundation of all symbolism. By virtue of this law, each thing, proceeding as it does from a metaphysical principle from which it derives all its reality, translates or expresses that principle in its own fashion and in accordance with its own order of existence, so that from one order to another all things are linked together and correspond in such a way as to contribute to the universal and total harmony, which, in the multiplicity of manifestation, can be likened to a reflection of the principial unity itself.

For this reason the laws of a lower domain can always be taken to symbolize realities of a higher order, wherein resides their own profoundest cause, which is at once their principle and their end; we would recall in this connection the error of the modern "naturalistic" interpretations of ancient traditional doctrines, interpretations which purely and simply reverse the hierarchy of relationships between the different orders of reality. Thus, the purpose of symbols and myths has never been—as often wrongly alleged—to represent the movement of the heavenly bodies, the truth being that they often do contain figures inspired by that movement and intended to express, analogically, something very different, because the laws of that movement are a physical translation of the metaphysical principles on which they depend. What is true of astronomical phenomena can equally and for the same reason be applied to all other kinds of natural phenomena; these phenomena, by the very fact that they are derived from higher and transcendent principles, truly serve to symbolize those principles. Obviously, this in no way affects the reality possessed by the phenomena as such in the order of existence they belong to; on the contrary, it is the very basis of that reality, for apart from their dependence on their principles, all things would be mere non-entity.

This holds good for historical facts no less than for anything else: they likewise conform to the law of correspondence just mentioned, and thereby, in their own mode, translate higher realities, of which they are, so to speak, a human expression. We would add that from our point of view (which obviously is quite different from that of the profane historians[1]), it is this that gives to these facts the greater part of their significance. This symbolical character, while common to all historical events, is bound to be particularly clear-cut in the case of events connected with what may be called "sacred history"; thus it is recognizable in a most striking way, in all the circumstances of the life of Christ[2]. If the foregoing has been properly grasped, it will at once be apparent not only that there is no reason for denying the reality of these events and treating them as mere myths, but on the contrary that these events had to be such as they were, and could not have been otherwise; it is clearly impossible to attribute a sacred character to something devoid of all transcendent significance. In particular, if Christ died on the cross, it can be said that this was by reason of the symbolic value which the cross possesses in itself and which has always been recognized by all traditions; thus, without diminishing in any way its historical significance, the latter may be regarded as directly derived from the symbolical significance that goes with it.

A further consequence of this law of correspondence is the plurality of meanings contained in every symbol. Anything and everything can in fact be regarded as representing not only the metaphysical principles, but also realities of all orders higher than its own, even if still contingent, for these realities, on which it also more or less directly depends, play the part of "secondary causes" in respect of it; likewise, the effect can always be taken as a symbol of the cause, at

[1] "Historical truth itself is stable only when it is derived from the Principle" (*Ch'uang-tzu*, ch. XXV).

[2] Cf. St. Bernard, Sermon III on Palm Sunday, paragraph 1: "All that He wrought among them (i.e. men), all that He said and suffered, He disposed in such wise that not a single moment was passed without mystery, not a single letter was devoid of some mystery."—*Translator*.

any level whatsoever, because it is no more than the expression of something inherent in the nature of that cause. These multiple and hierarchically superimposed symbolical meanings are not in any way mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they are perfectly concordant, because they express the applications of one and the same principle to different orders; thus they complete and corroborate one another, while being integrated in the harmony of the total synthesis. This, moreover, is what makes symbolism a far less narrowly limited language than ordinary speech, and renders it best fitted to express and convey certain truths. The possibilities of conception it opens up are truly limitless, and it is for this reason that it constitutes the initiatory language *par excellence*, the indispensable vehicle of all traditional teaching.

Thus the cross, like any other symbol, can be regarded according to manifold senses; however, it is not our intention to develop them all equally here, and there are some that will merely be touched on occasionally. The essential object before us is the metaphysical sense, the first and most important of all, since it is properly the principial one; all other applications are more or less secondary and contingent. If we do consider some of these, it will always be with the ultimate object of attaching them to the metaphysical order, for this manifestly is what gives them their value and legitimacy, in conformity with the conception—quite forgotten by the modern world—of " traditional science ".

CHAPTER I

Multiplicity of States of the Being

Any being, whether human or otherwise, can clearly be envisaged from a large number—it can even be said, an indefinite number—of viewpoints; these are very unequal in importance, but all are equally legitimate in their respective domains, provided that none of them seeks to encroach beyond its own proper limits, or, what is still worse, to become exclusive and end by denying the others. Granted that this is so, and that accordingly none of these viewpoints, not even the most secondary and contingent of them, can be denied the place that belongs to it by the mere fact that it answers to some possibility, it is no less obvious, on the other hand, that from the metaphysical viewpoint, which alone concerns us here, the consideration of a being in its individual aspect is necessarily insufficient, since "metaphysical" is synonymous with "universal". Hence no doctrine that confines itself to the consideration of individual beings can merit the name of metaphysics, whatever may be its interest and value in other repects; such a doctrine can always be called "physical" in the original sense of the word, because it lies exclusively within the realm of "nature", that is to say, of manifestation; with the further restriction that it envisages only formal manifestation, and even more especially one of the states that constitute the latter.

Far from being an absolute and complete unity in himself, as most western philosophers, at any rate all modern ones, would regard him, the individual in reality constitutes but a relative and fragmentary unity. He is not a closed and self-sufficient whole, an "enclosed system" after the fashion of Leibnitz's "monad"; and the notion of "individual substance", thus understood, to which these philosophers generally attach so much importance, has no truly metaphysical

bearing: fundamentally, it is nothing else but the notion of the "subject" in logic, and while it may undoubtedly possess great usefulness in that respect, it cannot be legitimately carried beyond the limits of that special point of view. The individual, even when considered in the full extension of which he is capable, is not a total being, but only a particular state of manifestation of a being, a state subject to certain special and determined conditions of existence, and occupying a certain place in the indefinite series of the states of the total being. What characterizes a state as individual is the presence of form among these conditions of existence; it is obvious, however, that this form need not necessarily be conceived as spatial, for it is so only in the corporeal world, space being precisely one of the conditions that properly define that world.[1]

Reference must here be made, at least in summary fashion, to the fundamental distinction between the "Self" and the "ego", or between the "personality" and the "individuality", which has been dealt with more fully elsewhere.[2] The "Self", as has been pointed out, is the transcendent and permanent principle of which the manifested being, the human being for example, is no more than a transient and contingent modification, which moreover can in no wise affect this principle. Immutable in its own nature, the Self develops its possibilities in all the modalities of realization, indefinite in their multitude, which for the total being amount to so many states, each of which has its limiting and determining conditions of existence, and only one of which constitutes the portion, or rather particular determination, of this being which is the "ego" or human individuality. Again, this development is only such, in reality, when viewed from the standpoint of manifestation, outside of which everything must necessarily be in perfect simultaneity in the "eternal present"; on that account the "permanent actuality" of the Self is not affected thereby. The Self is thus the principle by which all the states of the being exist, each in its own proper sphere, which may be called a degree of existence;

[1] See *Man and his becoming according to the Vedânta*, ch. II and X.
[2] *Ibid.*, ch. II.

and this must be understood not only of the manifested states—whether individual, like the human state, or supra-individual, in other words whether formal or formless,—but also, though the word " exist " then becomes inadequate, of the unmanifested states, comprising all those possibilities which, by their very nature, do not admit of any manifestation, as well as the possibilities of manifestation themselves in their principial state ; but this Self subsists by itself alone, for in the total and indivisible unity of its innermost nature it has not, and cannot have, any principle external to itself.

It has just been said that the word " exist " cannot properly be applied to the Unmanifest, or in other words to the principial state ; in fact, taken in its strictly etymological sense (from the Latin *ex-stare*), this word indicates the being that is dependent on a principle other than itself, or, in other terms, one which is not for itself its own sufficient cause, in short, a contingent being, which is the same thing as a manifested being.[1] When we speak of Existence, we thus mean universal manifestation, with all the states or degrees that it contains, each of which may equally be described as a " world ", one of a series that are indefinite in their multiplicity ; but this term no longer fits the degree of pure Being, the principle of all manifestation though itself unmanifested, nor, *a fortiori*, does it fit that which lies beyond Being itself.

Before all else, it must be stated that Existence, regarded universally according to the above definition, is one and indivisible in its inner nature, just as Being is one in itself ; indeed this unity of Existence derives directly from the one-ness of Being, since universal Existence is nothing but the total manifestation of Being, or, to be more exact, the realization, in manifested mode, of all the possibilities that Being implies and contains principially in its very one-ness. Again, like the one-ness of Being, the unity of Existence[2] does

[1] Hence, strictly speaking, the common expression " the existence of God " is meaningless, whether by " God " one means Being, as is generally intended, or, *a fortiori*, the Supreme Principle which is beyond Being.

[2] In Arabic *Wahdatul-wujûd*.—On the distinction to be drawn between the " unity " of Existence, the " one ness " of Being, and the " non-duality " of the Supreme Principle, see *Man and his becoming according to the Vedânta*, ch. VI.

not exclude the multiplicity of the modes of manifestation or become affected thereby, since it equally comprehends all these modes by the very fact that they are equally possible, this possibility implying that each of them shall be realized under the conditions appropriate to it. Hence, in its unity, Existence implies, as has just been explained, an indefinitude of degrees, corresponding to all the modes of universal manifestation; and this indefinite multiplicity of the degrees of Existence implies correlatively, for any being considered in its totality, an equally indefinite multiplicity of possible states, each of which must be realized in a given degree of Existence.

This multiplicity of the states of the being, which is a fundamental metaphysical truth, holds good even when one confines oneself to considering the states of manifestation, as has just been done here, and as must always be done whenever Existence alone is under discussion; hence it holds good *a fortiori* if one considers the states of both manifestation and non-manifestation at once, the combination of which constitutes Being in its totality; the latter is then no longer envisaged in the sole domain of Existence, even taken in the whole integrality of its extension, but in the unlimited realm of universal possibility. It should be clearly understood, in fact, that Existence comprises only possibilities of manifestation, and even then with the restriction that these possibilities are conceived only in so far as they actually manifest themselves, for, in so far as they are not manifested, that is, principially, they are at the degree of Being. Hence, Existence is far from covering the whole of possibility, conceived as truly universal and total, that is to say outside and beyond all limitations, even including that first limitation which constitutes the most primordial determination of all, namely the affirmation of pure Being.[1]

[1] It should be noted that in order to construct their systems, philosophers always seek, consciously or unconsciously, to set some limit on universal Possibility; this is contradictory, but it is demanded by the very nature of a system as such. It might be quite interesting to write a history of the different modern philosophical theories, which are the ones that most commonly show this systematic character, from the standpoint of the limitations attributed to universal Possibility.

When the states of non-manifestation of a being are in question, there is again a distinction to be drawn between the degree of Being and what lies beyond; in the latter case, it is clear that the term "Being" itself can no longer be strictly applied in its proper sense; yet limitations of language oblige one to retain it for want of a better, while not attributing to it any but a purely analogical and symbolical value; it would otherwise be impossible to speak at all of what one is dealing with. We may accordingly continue to speak of the total being as at the same time both manifested in certain of its states and unmanifested in others, without thereby in any way implying that in the case of the latter it is necessary to stop short at the consideration of what corresponds to the degree which is properly that of Being.[1]

The states of non-manifestation are essentially extra-individual, and like the principial Self from which they cannot be separated, they cannot in any way be individualized; as for the states of manifestation, some are individual, while others are non-individual, a difference which, as has been explained, corresponds to the distinction between formal and formless manifestation. If we consider the case of man in particular, his present individuality, which properly speaking constitutes the human state, is only one state of manifestation among an indefinitude of others, which must all be conceived as equally possible, and thereby as existing at least virtually, if not effectively realized by the being whom we are considering, under a relative and partial aspect, in this individual human state.

[1] On the state that corresponds to the degree of Being, and the unconditioned state that lies beyond, see *Man and his becoming according to the Vedânta*, ch. XV and XVI.

CHAPTER II

Universal Man

The effective realization of the being's multiple states is related to the conception which various traditional doctrines, including Moslem esotericism, denote by the term "Universal Man"[1], a conception which, as has been said elsewhere, establishes a constitutive analogy between universal manifestation and its individual human modality, or, to use the language of Western Hermetism, between the "macrocosm" and the "microcosm".[2] This idea may moreover be envisaged at different levels and with various extensions, the same analogy remaining valid in all these cases[3]; thus, it may be restricted to humanity itself, considered either in its specific nature or even in its social organization, for on this analogy the institution of the castes, among other applications, essentially rests.[4] At another and more extended level, the same notion may embrace the domain of existence corresponding to the whole of a given state of the being, whatever this state may actually be[5]; but this signification, especially if

[1] "Universal Man" (in Arabic *El-Insânul-kâmil*) is at the same time "Primordial Man" (*El-Insânul-qadîm*); it is the *Adam Qadmon* of the Hebrew *Qabbalah*; it is also the "King" (*Wang*) of the Far-Eastern tradition (*Tao-te-King*, XXV).—In Moslem esotericism there exist a large number of treatises by different authors on *El-Insânul-kâmil*; the only ones that will be mentioned here, as being particularly important from the present point of view, are those of Mohyiddin ibn Arabi and Abdul-karîm El-Jîli.

[2] The use we make of these terms, as also of certain others, has already been explained elsewhere, and there does not seem to be any need to be over-concerned at the abuse sometimes made of them (*Man and his becoming*, pp. 33–34 and 59).—These terms, of Greek origin, also have their exact Arabic equivalents (*El-kawnul-kabîr* and *El-kawnus-saghîr*), which are taken in the same sense.

[3] A similar observation might be made about the theory of cycles, which is ultimately only another expression for the states of existence: every secondary cycle reproduces, in its own manner, phases corresponding to those of the more extensive cycle to which it is subordinated.

[4] Cf. the *Purusha-Sûkta* of the *Rig-Vêda*, X, 90.

[5] On this subject, and in regard to the *Vaishwânara* of the Hindu tradition, see *Man and his becoming*, pp. 129–131.

it be a question of the human state (even when taken in the integral development of all its modalities) or of another individual state, is still properly no more than "cosmological", and what must essentially be considered here is a metaphysical transposition of the idea of individual man, which must be carried out in the extra-individual and supra-individual domain. In this sense, and if reference is made to what has been said earlier on, the conception of "Universal Man" will apply in the first place to the sum total of the states of manifestation; but it can be rendered still more universal, in the fulness of the true meaning of that word, if it is also extended to the states of non-manifestation, and hence to the complete and perfect realization of the total being—taking this in the higher sense indicated above, and always with the reservation that the term "being" itself can then be used in a purely analogical sense only.

It is essential to note here that every metaphysical transposition of the kind just mentioned should be regarded as the expression of an analogy in the rightful sense of the word. To make clear what this implies, we would recall that every true analogy must be applied inversely: this is represented by the well-known symbol of the "seal of Solomon", formed by the combination of two opposed triangles.[1] For example, just as the image of an object in a mirror is inverted in relation to the object, so that which is the first or greatest in the principial order is, in appearance at least, the last or smallest in the order of manifestation.[2] To take terms of comparison from the mathematical sphere, as we have already done in order to make the matter clearer, the geometrical point is quantitatively nil and occupies no space, although (as will be explained later) it is the principle by which the whole of space is produced, the latter being no more than the development or expansion of its virtualities. In the same way, arithmetical unity is the least of numbers when considered as situated among them in their multiplicity, but it is the greatest in

[1] See *ibid.*, ch. I and III.

[2] We have seen this very clearly expressed in texts taken from both the *Upanishads* and the Gospel.

principle, since it virtually contains them all and produces the whole series of them by the mere repetition of itself.

There is thus analogy, but not similitude, between individual man, a relative and incomplete being, who is here taken as the type of a certain mode of existence, or even of all conditioned existence, and the total unconditioned being, transcendent in respect of all particular and determined modes of existence, who is symbolically designated as "Universal Man". To apply this analogy, it may be said that if "Universal Man" is the principle of all manifestation, individual man represents, in his own order, its resultant and as it were its end-product, and for this reason all traditions agree in regarding him as being formed by a synthesis of all the elements and all the kingdoms of nature[1]. This must be so if the analogy is to be exact, and so in fact it is; but, in order to justify it completely, and with it the very designation "Universal Man", it would be necessary to go into the question of the cosmogonic function which is peculiar to the human being; however, to develop this fully would take us too far afield and we must await another occasion. For the present, then, suffice it to say that the human being, in the realm of individual existence that pertains to him, plays a part which may truly be described as "central" in respect of all other beings that are likewise situated in that realm. By virtue of this part that he plays, man is the most complete expression of the individual state in question, for all its possibilities are as it were integrated in him, at least in a certain respect and on the understanding that they are taken, not in their corporeal modality alone, but in the whole range of all their modalities, with the indefinite extension of which they are capable.[2] Here lie the profoundest of the reasons

[1] In this connection we would cite in particular the Moslem tradition regarding the creation of the angels and of men.—The real significance of such traditions, needless to say, has absolutely nothing in common with any "transformist" or even simply "evolutionist" conception, in the most general sense of the word, nor with any of the modern fantasies inspired more or less directly by such anti-traditional conceptions.

[2] The realization of the integral human individuality corresponds to the "primordial state" of which we have often spoken and which is called the "Edenic state" in the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

on which the analogy we are considering rests ; and it is this particular situation that allows of a valid transposition of the notion of man, rather than of any other manifested being in the same state, in order to transform it into the traditional conception of " Universal Man ".[1]

One further remark should be added, which is of the first importance : " Universal Man " exists only virtually, and as it were negatively, in the manner of an ideal archetype, so long as the effective realization of the total being has not endowed him with actualized positive existence. This is true for any being whatsoever, when regarded as carrying out, or destined to carry out, such a realization.[2] To avoid all misunderstanding, it should be added that such a manner of speaking, which presents as successive that which is essentially simultaneous, is valid only in so far as one adopts the special standpoint of a state of manifestation of the being, this state being taken as a starting-point for the realization. Again, it is clear that expressions such as " negative existence " and " positive existence " are not to be taken literally, in contexts where the very notion of " existence " can be properly applied only in a certain degree and up to a certain point ; but the imperfections inherent in language, bound up as it is with the conditions of the human state and even more particularly with its corporeal and terrestrial modality, often necessitate the use, with some precautions, of " verbal images " of this kind, without which it would be quite impossible to make oneself intelligible, especially in languages as little adapted to the expression of metaphysical truth as are the western ones.

[1] In order to forestall misunderstandings, we must recall that we always use the word " transformation " in its strictly etymological sense, namely that of " passing beyond form ", and hence beyond all that belongs to the order of individual existence.

[2] In a certain sense, the two states, negative and positive, of " Universal Man " correspond respectively, in the terminology of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, to the state prior to the " Fall " and the state consequent upon " Redemption "; from this viewpoint, these two states are the two Adams spoken of by St. Paul (I Cor. xvi), which shows at the same time the relationship of " Universal Man " to the *Logos* (Cf. *Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel*, 2nd ed. p. 98).

CHAPTER III

Metaphysical Symbolism of the Cross

Most traditional doctrines symbolize the realization of "Universal Man" by a sign which is everywhere the same, because, as was said at the outset, it is one of those directly attached to the Primordial Tradition. That sign is the sign of the cross, which very clearly represents the manner of achievement of this realization by the perfect communion of all the states of the being, harmoniously and conformably ranked, in integral expansion, in the double sense of "amplitude" and "exaltation".[1] In fact, this double expansion of the being may be regarded as taking place horizontally on the one hand, that is, at a certain given level or degree of existence, and vertically on the other, that is, in the hierarchical superimposition of all the degrees. Thus, the horizontal direction represents "amplitude" or integral extension of the individuality taken as basis for realization, an extension which consists in the indefinite development of a given group of possibilities subject to certain special conditions of manifestation; and it should be clearly understood that, in the case of the human being, this extension is in no way confined to the corporeal part of the individuality, but includes all its modalities, of which the corporeal state is properly only one. The vertical direction represents the hierarchy, likewise and *a fortiori* indefinite, of the multiple states, each of which, when similarly considered in its integrality, is one of those groups of possibilities corresponding to one of the "worlds" or degrees, which are included

[1] These terms are borrowed from the language of Moslem esotericism, which is particularly precise on this point. In the western world, the symbol of the Rosy Cross bore exactly the same meaning, before modern incomprehension gave rise to all kinds of bizarre or insignificant interpretations; the meaning of the rose will be explained later.

in the total synthesis of "Universal Man".[1] In this cruciform representation, the horizontal expansion therefore corresponds to the indefinitude of possible modalities of one and the same state of the being, regarded integrally, and the vertical super-imposition to the indefinite series of states of the total being.

Furthermore, it need hardly be said that the state whose development is depicted by the horizontal line may be any state whatsoever; in fact, it will be the state in which the being that realizes "Universal Man" is situated in respect of its manifestation, and that state is for such a being the starting-point and the support or basis for this realization. Any and every state can furnish a being with such a basis, as will appear more clearly in what follows; if in this respect more special consideration is accorded to the human state, the reason is that it is our own state and thus concerns us more directly, so that the case we have particularly to deal with is that of beings who start from this state in order to carry out the realization in question; but it should be clearly understood that from the viewpoint of pure metaphysics this case is in no wise a privileged one.

It may be observed here that the effective totalization of the being, since it is beyond all conditions, corresponds to what the Hindu doctrine calls "Deliverance" (*Moksha*), and to what Moslem esotericism calls the "Supreme Identity".[2] Moreover, according to the latter traditional form, "Universal Man", in so far as he is represented by the couple "Adam-Eve", has the same number as *Allâh*,

[1] "When man, in the 'universal degree', exalts himself towards the sublime, when there arise in him the other degrees (non-human states) in perfect expansion, he is 'Universal Man'. Exaltation and amplitude alike have attained their fulness in the Prophet (who is thus identical with 'Universal Man')" (*Epistle on the Manifestation of the Prophet*, by Sheikh Mohammed ibn Fazlallah El-Hindi). This will also explain the words uttered about twenty years ago by a personage who then occupied a very high position in Islam: "If Christians have the sign of the cross, Moslems have the doctrine of it." We would add that, in the esoteric order, the relationship between "Universal Man" and the Word on the one hand, and the Prophet on the other, leaves no room, as regards the actual basis of the doctrine, for any real divergence between Christianity and Islam. It would seem that the ancient Persian conception of *Vohu-Mana* also corresponded to that of "Universal Man".

[2] On this subject see the concluding chapters of *Man and his becoming*.

/hich may be taken as a means of expressing the " Supreme dentity ".[1] This calls for a word of explanation, since it ıight be objected that the designation " Adam-Eve ", hough assuredly capable of transposition, nevertheless pplies in its proper sense to the primordial human state lone. Yet if the " Supreme Identity " is effectively realized ınly in the totalization of the multiple states, it can still be lescribed as in some sense already virtually realized at the ' Edenic " stage, in the integration of the human being when ›rought back to his original centre, which, as will be shown ıter, is also the point of direct communication with the other tates.[2]

Again, it may be said that the integration of the human tate, or of any other state, represents in its own order and legree the actual totalization of the being, as will be made ›lain by means of the geometrical symbolism that we are .bout to expound. If this be so, the reason is that it is ›ossible to discover in everything, in individual man, for :xample, or, more particularly, in corporeal man, a symbol .nd as it were a figuration of " Universal Man ", since each ›art of the Universe, whether it be a world or a particular ›eing, is always and everywhere analogous to the whole. Thus a philosopher such as Leibnitz was certainly right in .dmitting that every " individual substance " (with the eservations we have made earlier as to the value of this :xpression) must contain in itself an integral representation ›f the Universe, and this is a correct application of the analogy

[1] This number, which is 66, is given by the sum of the numerical values f the letters forming the names *Adam wa Hawâ*. According to the Hebrew *ienesis*, man, " created male and female ", in other words in an androgynic tate, is " in the image of God " ; and, following the Moslem tradition, *llâh* ordered the angels to adore man (*Qorân* ii, 34 ; xvii, 61 ; xviii, 50). The original androgynic state is the complete human state, in which the omplements, instead of being opposed, are perfectly balanced ; we will eturn to this later. Here it need only be added that in the Hindu radition, an expression of this state is to be found symbolically contained n the word *Hamsa*, in which the two complementary poles of the being are nade to correspond to the two phases of breathing, which for their part epresent the analogous phases of universal manifestation.

[2] The two stages here indicated in the realization of the " Supreme dentity " correspond to the distinction between what might be called ' effective immortality " and " virtual immortality " (see *Man and his ecoming*, pp. 131–133).

between the "macrocosm" and the "microcosm"[1]; but, in confining himself to the consideration of "individual substance" and in seeking to equate it with the being itself (a complete and closed being, that is to say, lacking any effective communication with anything that transcends it), he debarred himself from passing from the direction of "amplitude" to that of "exaltation", and thus deprived his theory of any true metaphysical scope.[2] It is no part of our present intention to enter into the examination of philosophical notions of any kind, or of anything else equally referable to the "profane" sphere; but the above example came quite naturally to mind, as an almost immediate application of what has just been said about the two directions in which the expansion of the total being is carried out.

To return to the symbolism of the cross, it must also be noted that apart from the metaphysical and principial significance so far exclusively spoken of, the cross possesses several other meanings which are more or less secondary and contingent; this is quite normal, following what has been said in general about the plurality of meanings comprised in every symbol. Before developing the geometrical representation of the being and its multiple states, as synthetically contained in the sign of the cross, and before going into details of this symbolism—a rather complex one, if developed to its fullest extent—we shall say something about those other meanings; for, although the questions connected with them may seem somewhat remote from the real subject of this book, all these things are nevertheless linked together in a certain way, and sometimes even more closely than one might be inclined to suppose, always by reason of that law of correspondence which, as explained at the outset, lies at the very foundation of all symbolism.

[1] We have already pointed out that Leibnitz, unlike other modern philosophers in this respect, was in possession of a number of traditional data, which however were fairly elementary and incomplete, and which, to judge by the use he made of them, he does not seem to have completely understood.

[2] Another major defect in the conception of Leibnitz, and one that probably is closely bound up with the former, is the introduction of the moral point of view into considerations of a universal order in which it has no place, by means of the "principle of the best", which this philosopher sought to regard as the "sufficient cause" of all existence. In this connection it should also be pointed out that the distinction between the possible and the real, such as Leibnitz attempted to establish, cannot have any metaphysical value, for all that is possible is thereby also real according to its proper mode.

CHAPTER IV

The Directions of Space

Certain Western writers with more or less initiatory pretensions have sought to read an exclusively astronomical significance into the cross, by saying that it is a " symbol of the cruciform junction that the ecliptic forms with the equator ", and also " an image of the equinoxes, since the sun successively covers these two points in its annual course ".[1] In fact, if this is so, the reason is, as mentioned above, that astronomical phenomena themselves can from a higher viewpoint be regarded as symbols, and as such one may find in them, as in everything else, a figuration of Universal Man. But if these phenomena are symbols, it is clear that they are not the thing symbolized, and that the fact of confusing the two constitutes a reversal of the normal relationships between different orders of reality.[2] When the figure of the cross is perceived in astronomical or other phenomena, it has exactly the same symbolic value as that which we ourselves can trace[3]; this merely proves that true symbolism, far from having been artificially invented by man, is to be found in nature herself, or rather, that the whole of nature amounts to no more than a symbol of the transcendent realities.

Even if we thus restore the correct interpretation of these

[1] These quotations are taken, as a very typical example, from a well-known masonic writer, J.-M. Ragon (*Rituel du grade de Rose-Croix*, pp. 25–28).

[2] It may be as well to recall here, though we have already done so on many occasions, that this astronomical interpretation, always insufficient in itself, and radically false when it seeks to be exclusive, was what gave rise to the notorious " solar myth " theory, invented in the late eighteenth century by Dupuis and Volnay, later reproduced by Max Müller and again put forward in our own day by the chief representatives of a self-styled " science of religions " which we find it rather difficult to take seriously.

[3] It should be noted that symbols always retain their proper value, even when traced without conscious intention, as occurs when certain symbols, no longer understood, are preserved merely by way of ornamentation.

things, the two sentences just quoted both contain an error. In actual fact, on the one hand, the ecliptic and the equator do not form a cross, for their two planes do not cut at right angles; on the other hand, the two equinoctial points are clearly joined by a straight line, so that here the cross is still less to be seen. What must in reality be considered is, on the one hand, the plane of the equator and the axis joining the poles and perpendicular to that plane, and on the other hand the two lines respectively joining the pair of solsticial points and the pair of equinoctial points; we thus get what might be called, in the first case, the vertical cross, and in the second, the horizontal cross. The combination of the two crosses, which have the same centre, forms the three-dimensional cross, the branches of which are oriented in the six directions of space[1]; these latter correspond to the six cardinal points, which, with the centre itself, form the septenary.

We have already remarked elsewhere on the importance which the oriental doctrines attach to the seven regions of space, and also on their correspondence with certain cyclic periods.[2] It seems worth while to reproduce here a text previously quoted, which shows that the same thing is also to be found in the western traditions: "Clement of Alexandria says that from God, 'Heart of the Universe', issue all the directions of space, each indefinite in extent, one upwards, one downwards, one to the right, one to the left, one forwards and one backwards; turning His gaze in these six directions, none of which extends further than the others, He accomplishes the world; He is the beginning and the end (the *alpha* and *omega*); in Him the six phases of time are accomplished, and from Him they receive their indefinite extensions; herein resides the secret of the number seven".[3]

This symbolism is also that of the Hebrew *Qabbalah*, which

[1] "Directions" and "dimensions" of space should not be confused: there are six directions but only three dimensions, each of which comprises two diametrically opposed directions. Thus the cross we are considering has six branches, but is formed of only three straight lines, each perpendicular to the other two; in geometrical language, each branch is a "half-line" running in a certain direction from the centre.

[2] *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. VII.

[3] P. Vulliaud, *La Kabbale juive*, vol. I, pp. 215–6.

speaks of the "Holy Palace" or "Inward Palace" as being situated at the centre of the six directions of space. The three letters of the divine Name Jehovah,[1] by their sextuple permutation in these six directions, indicate the immanence of God in the bosom of the world, that is, the manifestation of the *Logos* at the centre of all things in the primordial point, of which all extent is merely the expansion or development: "Out of the void (*Thohu*) He formed something, and out of that which is not, He made that which is. He carved great columns from the impalpable ether.[2] He reflected, and His Speech (*Memra*) produced every object and all things by His Name, The One.[3] This primordial point at which the Divine Word is uttered does not develop solely in space, but also in time; it is the "centre of the world" in every sense, that is, it is at once at the centre of space and at the centre of time. This, of course, if taken literally, concerns our world alone, being the only one whose conditions of existence are directly expressible in human language; but, as it is really a question of the centre of all the worlds, we may pass to the supra-sensible order by making an analogical transposition in which space and time no longer bear any but a purely symbolical meaning.

We have seen that Clement of Alexandria deals with six phases of time, corresponding respectively to the six divisions of space: these, as has been shown, are the six cyclic periods, subdivisions of a more general period, and sometimes represented as six millenia. In fact, both the *Zohar* and the *Talmud* divide the duration of the world into millenary periods: "The world will endure for six thousand years to which the six first utterances of Genesis allude[4]; and these six

[1] This Name is formed of four letters, *iod he vau he*, but there are only three different ones since *he* occurs twice.

[2] We are here dealing with the "columns of the Sephirothic tree"; central column, right-hand column and left-hand column; more will be said of this later. Again, it is essential to note that the "ether" here in question should not be understood merely as the first element of the corporeal world, but also in a higher sense obtained by analogical transposition. This applies equally in the case of *Âkâsha* in the Hindu doctrine (see *Man and his becoming*, ch. III).

[3] *Sepher Ietsirah*, iv, 5.

[4] *Siphra di-Tseniutha*: *Zohar*, ii, 176b.

millenia are analogous to the six 'days' of Creation."[1] The seventh millenium, like the seventh "day", is the *Sabbath*, that is, the phase of return to the Principle, which naturally corresponds to the centre, regarded as a seventh region of space. We have here a sort of symbolical chronology, which must clearly not be taken literally, any more than those found in other traditions: Josephus[2] remarks that six thousand years form ten "great years", a "great year" being six centuries (this is the *Naros* of the Chaldaeans); but elsewhere what is denoted by this expression is a far longer period, ten or twelve thousand years in the case of the Greeks and Persians. This, however, does not matter here, since we are in no way trying to calculate the real duration of our world, which would call for a profound study of the Hindu theory of *Manvantaras*; it will therefore be enough to take these divisions with their symbolic value. Accordingly, we will merely say that we are concerned with six phases of indeterminate duration, plus a seventh which corresponds to the accomplishment of all things and their re-establishment in the primal state.[3]

To return to the cosmological doctrine of the *Qabbalah* as set forth in the *Sepher Ietsirah*: "What is in question," says M. Vulliaud, "is a development proceeding from Thought down to the modification of Sound (Voice), from the impenetrable to the comprehensible. It will be seen that we have before us a symbolic account of the mystery which has universal genesis for its object and which is bound up with the mystery of unity. In other passages, it is that of the 'point' which develops by lines in all directions,[4] and which becomes comprehensible only through the 'Inward Palace'. It is that of the ungraspable ether (*Avir*), in which is produced the concentration whence Light (*Aor*) emanates."[5] The point is in fact the symbol of unity; it is the principle

[1] Cf. the Biblical saying: "A thousand years in thy sight are as yesterday, and as a watch in the night" (Ps. lxxxix, 4).

[2] *Antiquities of the Jews* i, 4.

[3] This last millenium is doubtless the "reign of a hundred years" spoken of in the Apocalypse.

[4] These lines are represented as the "hair of *Shiva*" in the Hindu tradition.

[5] *La Kabbale juive*, vol. I, p. 217.

of spatial extent which exists only by its radiation (the previous "void" being nothing but pure virtuality), but it becomes comprehensible only when one situates oneself in space, of which it is then the centre, as will be explained more fully later. The emanation of light, which gives space its reality by "making something out of the void and that which is out of that which was not", is an expansion which follows concentration. Here we find the two phases of aspiration and expiration which so often occur in the Hindu doctrine, and the second of which corresponds to the production of the manifested world; and one may note the analogy that also exists, in this respect, with the beating of the heart and the circulation of the blood in the living being. But let us proceed: "The Light (*Aor*) burst forth from the mystery of the ether (*Avir*). The hidden point was manifested, that is to say the letter *iod*".[1] This letter hieroglyphically represents the Principle, and all the other letters of the Hebrew alphabet are said to be formed from it, a formation which, according to the *Sepher Ietsirah*, symbolizes that of the manifested world itself.[2] It is also said that the incomprehensible primordial point which is the unmanifested One, forms from itself three points wihch represent the Beginning, the Middle and the End,[3] and that these three points put together constitute the letter *iod*, which is thus the One manifested (or more exactly, affirmed *quâ* principle of universal manifestation), or, to speak in theological terms, God making Himself "Centre of the World" by his Word. "When this *iod* has been produced," says the *Sepher Ietsirah*, "that which remained of the mystery of the hidden *Avir* (ether) was *Aor* (light)"; and in fact, if *iod* is removed from the word *Avir*, what is left is *Aor*.

[1] *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 218.

[2] This "formation" (*Ietsirah*) should properly be understood as the production of manifestation in the subtle state; manifestation in the gross state is called *Asiah*, while on the other hand *Beriah* is formless manifestation. For the exact correspondence of the worlds envisaged by the *Qabbalah* with the *Tribhuvana* of the Hindu doctrine, see *Man and his becoming*, ch. V.

[3] In this connection these three points can be assimilated to the three elements of the monosyllable *Aum* (*Om*) in the Hindu symbolism, and also in the ancient Christian symbolism (see *Man and his becoming*, ch. XVII, and *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. IV).

On this subject M. Vulliaud quotes the commentary of Moses de Léon: "After recalling that the Holy One, blessed be He, the Unknowable, can be apprehended only through His attributes (*middoth*) by which He has created the worlds,[1] let us begin with the exegesis of the first word of the Thorah: Bereshith.[2] Ancient writers have informed us regarding this mystery that it is hidden in the Supreme Degree, the pure and impalpable Ether. This degree is the sum total of all the later mirrors ("later" because they are exterior to that Degree itself).[3] They proceed from it by the mystery of the point which is itself a hidden degree emanating from the mystery of the pure mysterious Ether.[4] The first Degree, absolutely concealed (unmanifested), cannot be apprehended.[5] Similarly, the mystery of the supreme point, though profoundly hidden,[6] can be apprehended in the mystery of the inward Palace. The mystery of the supreme Crown (*Kether*, the first of the ten *Sephiroth*) corresponds to that of the pure and impalpable Ether (*Avir*). It is the cause of all causes and the origin of all origins. It is in this mystery, the invisible origin of all things, that the hidden 'point', whence all proceeds, takes birth. On that account, it is said in the

[1] We here find the equivalent of the distinction drawn by the Hindu doctrine between *Brahma* "unqualified" (*nirguna*) and *Brahma* "qualified" (*saguna*), i.e. between the "Supreme" and the "Non-Supreme", the latter being not different from *Ishwara* (see *Man and his becoming*, ch. I and X). —*Middah* literally means "measure" (cf. Sanskrit *Matra*).

[2] This, as is well-known, is the opening word of *Genesis*: "*In principio*".

[3] It is clear that this degree is the same thing as the "universal degree" of Moslem esotericism, the one in which all the other degrees, i.e. all the states of Existence, are synthetically totalized. The same doctrine also makes use of the simile of the mirror and others of the same type: thus according to an expression already quoted elsewhere (*Man and his becoming* ch. X), Unity, considered as containing in itself all aspects of the Divinity (*Asrâr rabbâniyah* or "dominical mysteries"), i.e. all the Divine attributes, expressed by the names *Sifâtiyah* (see *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. III), "is the reverberating surface of the Absolute (the 'Holy One' ungraspable apart from His attributes) with countless facets, magnifying every creature that looks at itself directly therein"; and, needless to say, it is precisely these *Asrâr rabbâniyah* which are in question here.

[4] The degree represented by the point, which corresponds to Unity, is that of pure Being (*Ishwara* in the Hindu doctrine).

[5] In this connection we may refer to the teaching of the Hindu doctrine on the subject of what is beyond Being, i.e. the unconditioned state of *Atmâ* (see *Man and his becoming*, ch. XVI, where we have also indicated the concordant teachings of other traditions).

[6] Being is still unmanifested, but is the principle of all manifestation.

Sepher Ietsirah: 'Before One, what canst thou count?' Which means: before that point, what canst thou count or comprehend?[1] Before that point, there was nothing except *Ain*, that is, the mystery of the pure and impalpable Ether, so named (by a simple negation) by reason of its incomprehensibility.[2] The comprehensible beginning of existence lies in the mystery of the supreme 'point'[3]. And since this point is the 'beginning' of all things, it is called 'Thought' (*Mahasheba*).[4] The mystery of creative Thought corresponds to the hidden 'point'. In the inward Palace the mystery attached to the hidden 'point' can be understood, for the pure and impalpable Ether remains for ever mysterious. The 'point' is Ether rendered palpable (by the 'concentration' which is the starting-point of all differentiation) in the mystery of the inward Palace or Holy of Holies.[5] Everything, without exception, was at first conceived in Thought.[6] And if anyone should say: 'Lo! there is something new in the world,' impose silence on him, for that thing was previously conceived in Thought.[7] From the hidden 'point' emanates the inward Holy Palace (by the lines issuing from that point along the six directions of space). This is the Holy of Holies, the fiftieth year (allusion to the *Jubilee*, which represents the return to the primordial state)[8],

[1] One is in fact the first of all numbers; before it, accordingly, there is nothing that can be counted: here numeration is taken as a symbol of knowledge in distinctive mode.

[2] This is the metaphysical Zero, or the "Non-Being" of the Far-Eastern tradition, symbolized by the "void" (cf. *Tao-te-King*, XI); we have already explained elsewhere why expressions of negative form are the only ones still applicable beyond Being (*Man and his becoming*, ch. XV).

[3] i.e. in Being, which is the principle of Existence, or in other words universal manifestation, just as unity is the principle and beginning of all numbers.

[4] Because all things must be conceived by thought before being realized outwardly; this should be understood analogically by a transposition from the human order to the cosmic.

[5] The "Holy of Holies" was represented by the innermost part of the Temple at Jerusalem, which was the Tabernacle (*mishkan*) wherein the *Shekinah*, i.e. the Divine Presence, manifested itself.

[6] This is the Word *quâ* divine Intellect, which, according to an expression used by Christian theology, is the "*locus possibilium*".

[7] This is the "permanent actuality" of all things in the "eternal present".

[8] See *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. III; it will be noted that $50 = 7^2 + 1$. The word *kol*, "all", in Hebrew and Arabic, has the numerical value of 50. Cf. also the "fifty gates of the Intelligence".

which is likewise called the Voice that emanates from Thought.[1]

All being and all causes thus emanate by the power of the 'point' from on High. Behold that which relates to the mysteries of the three supreme *Sephiroth.*"[2] This passage, despite its length, has purposely been quoted in full, because, apart from its own interest, it has a far more direct connection with the subject of the present study than might at first sight be supposed.

The symbolism of the directions of space will be applied in all that follows, whether from the " macrocosmic " viewpoint, as in what has gone before or from the " microcosmic ". In geometrical terms, the three-dimensional cross forms a " system of co-ordinates " to which the whole of space can be referred; here space will symbolize the sum total of all possibilities, either of a particular being or of universal Existence. This system is formed by three axes, one vertical and two horizontal, which are three perpendicular diameters of an indefinite sphere, and which, even independently of any astronomical considerations, may be regarded as oriented towards the six cardinal points. In the text of Clement of Alexandria that has been quoted, upwards and downwards correspond respectively to the Zenith and the Nadir, right and left to South and North, forward and backward to East and West; confirmation of these correspondences may be found in almost all traditions. It may also be said that the vertical axis is the polar axis, that is, the fixed line which joins the two poles and about which all things accomplish their rotation: it is therefore the main axis, whereas the two horizontal axes are only secondary and relative. Of the two latter, the North-South axis may be called the solsticial axis, and the other the equinoctial axis, and this brings us back to the astronomical standpoint, by virtue of the correspondence between the cardinal points and the phases of the

[1] This is still the Word, but *qud* divine Utterance; it is first inward Thought (i.e. in Itself), then outward Utterance (i.e. in respect of universal Existence), Utterance being the manifestation of Thought; and the first word uttered is the *Iehi Aor* (*Fiat Lux*) of *Genesis.*

[2] *La Kabbale juive,* vol. I, p. 217.

annual cycle. A complete exposition of this correspondence would take us too far afield and is not of consequence here, though a place may perhaps be found for it in another study.[1]

[1] St. Paul alludes to the symbolism of the directions or dimensions of space when he speaks of "the breadth, the length, the height and the depth of the love of Jesus Christ" (Ephesians iii, 18). Here, there are only four terms enunciated distinctly instead of six: the first two correspond respectively to the two horizontal axes, each of the latter being regarded in its totality; the two latter terms correspond to the two halves, upper and lower, of the vertical axis. The reason for this distinction, as regards the two halves of the vertical axis, is that they relate to two different and even in one sense opposed *gunas*; the two complete horizontal axes, on the other hand, relate to one and the same *guna*, as will be made clear in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

Hindu Theory of the Three Gunas

Before going any further, and in connection with what has just been said, it is necessary to refer again to the Hindu theory of the three *gunas*.[1] Our intention is not to treat this theory in full in all its applications, but merely to provide a brief summary of it in so far as it relates to the present subject. The three *gunas* are essential, constitutive and primordial qualities or attributes of beings envisaged in their different states of manifestation.[2] They are not states, but general conditions to which beings are subject, by which they are bound,[3] as it were, and in which they participate in indefinitely varying proportions, with the result that they are distributed hierarchically throughout the entire range of the "three worlds" (*Tribhuvana*), that is, throughout all the degrees of universal Existence.

The three gunas are: *sattwa*, conformity to the pure essence of Being (*Sat*), which is identical with the light of Knowledge

[1] See *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines*, pp. 258–259, and *Man and his becoming* ch., IV.

[2] The three *gunas* are in fact in *Prakriti* itself, which is the "root" (*mûla*) of universal manifestation; there, however, they are in perfect equilibrium in their primordial indifferentiation, and all manifestation represents a rupture of that equilibrium.

[3] In its ordinary, literal sense, the word *guna* means "cord"; similarly, the terms *bandha* and *pâsha*, which properly mean "bond", are applied to all the particular and limiting conditions of existence (*upâdhis*) that more specially define this or that state or mode of manifestation. It should however be stated that the term *guna* is applied more particularly to a bowstring; it would thus express, at least in a certain respect, the idea of "tension" at different degrees, and hence, by analogy, that of "qualification"; but perhaps it is not so much the idea of "tension" that is appropriate here as that of "tendency", which indeed is akin to it as the words themselves show, and which is the idea that most closely answers to the definition of the three *gunas*.

(*Jnâna*), symbolized by the luminosity of the heavenly spheres which represent the higher states of the being ; *rajas*, the urge that provokes the being's expansion in a given state, in other words the development of those of its possibilities that are situated at a certain level of Existence ; lastly, *tamas*, obscurity, assimilated to ignorance (*avidyâ*), the dark root of the being considered in its lower states. This is true for all manifested states of the being, but naturally it is also possible to consider these qualities or tendencies more particularly in relation to the human state. Thus *sattwa*, the upward tendency, always refers to states that are higher than the particular state taken as basis or starting-point in this hierarchical distribution, and *tamas*, the downward tendency, to states lower than that state ; as for *rajas*, it refers to this last state itself, regarded as occupying an intermediate situation between the higher and lower states, and hence defined by a tendency which is neither upward nor downward, but horizontal ; in the present case, this is the " world of man " (*mânava-loka*), that is, the domain or degree of universal Existence occupied by the human individual state. The relationship of all this to the symbolism of the cross will now be readily observed, whether that symbolism is considered from the purely metaphysical or from the cosmological viewpoint, and whether it is applied to the " macrocosmic " or to the " microcosmic " order. In all cases, *rajas* can be said to correspond to the entire horizontal line, or better, if the three-dimensional cross is considered, to the combination of the two lines that define the horizontal plane ; *tamas* corresponds to the lower part of the vertical line, that is, the part below the horizontal plane, while *sattwa* corresponds to the higher part of this same line, namely the part above the plane in question, which thus divides into two hemispheres, upper and lower, the indefinite sphere mentioned above.

In a text of the *Veda*, the three *gunas* are depicted as turning one into another in ascending order : " All was *tamas* (at the outset of manifestation regarded as emerging from the primordial indifferentiation of *Prakriti*) : It (the Supreme *Brahma*) commanded a change, and *tamas* took the hue

(i.e. the nature)[1] of *rajas* (intermediate between darkness and luminosity); and *rajas*, having received another command, took on the nature of *sattwa*." If we regard the three-dimensional cross as traced out from the centre of a sphere, as we have just done and shall often be doing again, then the change from *tamas* into *rajas* can be represented as the tracing of the lower half of the sphere, from one pole to the equator, and that from *rajas* into *sattwa* as the tracing of the upper half, from the equator to the other pole. The imaginary horizontal plane of the equator then represents, as has been said, the domain of the expansion of *rajas*, whereas *tamas* and *sattwa* tend respectively towards the two poles, the extremities of the vertical axis.[2] Lastly, the point from which the change of *tamas* into *rajas*, and then that of *rajas* into *sattwa*, is ordained, is the actual centre of the sphere, as will at once be clear from what has been said in the previous chapter[3]; this will be explained more fully later on.[4]

The above is applicable not only to the degrees of universal Existence but also to the states of any one being; there is always perfect correspondence between these two cases, for each state of a being develops, with all the extension of which it is capable (and which is indefinite), in one given degree of Existence. Again, in the cosmological sphere, it is possible to make certain more particular applications of this theory to the domain of the elements; but as the

[1] The word *varna*, which properly means "colour", and by generalization "quality", is used analogically to denote the nature or essence of a principle or a being; hence also its use in the sense of "caste", because the institution of castes, when its underlying reason is envisaged, essentially translates the diversity of natures peculiar to different human individuals (see *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines*, Part 3, ch. VI). The three *gunas*, moreover, are actually represented by symbolic colours: *tamas* by black, *rajas* by red, and *sattwa* by white (*Chhândogya Upanishad*, Prapathaka 6, Khanda 3, shruti 1; cf. *Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel*, 2nd edn., p. 53).

[2] This symbolism seems to us to explain and sufficiently justify the image of the "bowstring", which is implied in the meaning of the term *guna*.

[3] This function of the Principle, in the world and in each being, is what is referred to by the expression "inner ruler" (*antaryâmî*): it directs all things from the interior, itself residing at the innermost point of all, which is the centre (see *Man and his becoming*, ch. XIV).

[4] On this same text considered as providing a diagram of the organization of the "three worlds", in correspondence with the three *gunas*, see *L'Esotérisme de Dante*, ch. VI.

theory of the elements does not come within the scope of the present study, it is better to reserve everything connected with it for another book in which we intend to deal with the conditions of corporeal existence.

CHAPTER VI

The Union of Complements

We must now consider, at least summarily, another aspect of the symbolism of the cross, which is perhaps the one most generally known, although, at first sight at least, it may not seem to have much direct bearing on all that has gone before: we refer to the cross regarded as a symbol of the union of complements. For this purpose it suffices to envisage the cross in the most usual manner, namely in its two-dimensional form; to return from that to the three-dimensional form, however, one need only remember that the single horizontal line can be considered as the projection of the entire horizontal plane upon the vertical plane in which the figure is traced. In the present context the vertical line is taken as representing the active principle, and the horizontal line the passive one. These principles are also respectively designated masculine and feminine, by analogy with the human order; if they are considered in their widest sense, namely in relation to universal manifestation in its totality, they are then the principles that the Hindu doctrine calls *Purusha* and *Prakriti*,[1] It is not material here to recapitulate or develop the considerations arising out of the relationship between these two principles, but merely to show that despite appearances there is a certain connection between this significance of the cross and what has been called its metaphysical significance.

In the first place, while reserving the right to return to the point more explicitly later, we would say that this connection follows from the relationship between the vertical axis and

[1] See *Man and his becoming*, ch. IV.

the horizontal plane in the metaphysical signification of the cross. It should be clearly appreciated that terms such as active and passive, or their equivalents, have no meaning except in relation to each other, for complementarism is essentially a correlation between two terms. This being so, it is clear that a complementarism such as that of active and passive can be regarded at different levels, so that one and the same term may play an active or a passive role, according to what it is being placed in correlation with; but in every case it can always be said that in such a relationship the active term is, in its own order, the analogue of *Purusha* and the passive one that of *Prakriti*. Now, it will be seen later that the vertical axis, which connects together all the states of the being by passing through their respective centres, is the locus of manifestation of what the Far-Eastern tradition calls the "Activity of Heaven"; and this is precisely the "actionless" activity of *Purusha*, which determines in *Prakriti* the productions that correspond to all the possibilities of manifestation. As for the horizontal plane, it will be seen that this forms a "plane of reflection", symbolically represented as the "surface of the waters", and it is well known that in all traditions the "Waters" are a symbol of *Prakriti* or of "universal passivity".[1] To be strictly accurate, as this plane represents a certain degree of Existence (and any one of the horizontal planes which correspond to the indefinite multitude of the states of manifestation could be similarly regarded), it is not identified with *Prakriti* itself, but only with something which is already determined by a certain set of special conditions of existence (those which define a world), and which plays the part of *Prakriti* in a relative sense, at a certain level in the scale of universal manifestation.

Another point, which is directly connected with the notion of Universal Man, also calls for explanation. We spoke earlier of the latter as being constituted by the couple "Adam-Eve", and it has been pointed out elsewhere that the couple

[1] See *ibid*, ch. V.

Purusha-Prakriti, either in respect of all manifestation, or more particularly in respect of a given state of being, can be regarded as equivalent to Universal Man.[1] From this point of view, the union of complements must be regarded as constituting the primordial Androgyne of which all traditions speak. Without dwelling further on this question, it can be said that in the totalization of the being, the complements must in fact be in perfect equilibrium, with no predominance of one over the other. Again, it should be noted that the form as a rule symbolically assigned to the Androgyne is the spherical one,[2] which is the least differentiated of all, since it extends equally in all directions, being regarded by the Pythagoreans, for example, as the most perfect form and as the figure of universal totality.[3] In order to represent the idea of totality in this way, it is further necessary, as was said before, that the sphere shall be indefinite in extent, as are the axes that form the cross, which are three perpendicular diameters of this sphere. In other words, as the sphere is constituted by the radiation proceeding from its centre, it is never closed, since this radiation is indefinite and fills the whole extent by a series of concentric waves, each of which reproduces the original vibration's two phases of concentration and expansion.[4] These two phases, moreover,

[1] See *ibid*, ch. IV.

[2] In this respect cf. the speech which Plato, in the *Symposium*, puts into the mouth of Aristophanes; most modern commentators have made the mistake of overlooking its symbolical value, obvious though this is. Something quite similar is to be found in a certain aspect of the Far-Eastern symbolism of the *yin-yang*, with which we shall be dealing later.

[3] Of all lines of equal length, the circumference is that which encloses the greatest surface; similarly, of all bodies of equal surface, the sphere is that which contains the greatest volume; from the purely mathematical viewpoint, this is the reason why these figures were regarded as the most perfect. This idea inspired Leibnitz with his conception of the "best of worlds", which he defined as being, out of the indefinite multitude of all possible worlds, the one that contains the most being or positive reality; but, as already indicated, the application he made of the idea is devoid of any true metaphysical meaning.

[4] This luminous spherical form, not limited and not closed, with its alternations of concentration and expansion (successive from the standpoint of manifestation but in reality simultaneous in the "eternal present"), is in Islamic esotericism the form of the *Rūh muhammadiyah*; it is this total form of Universal Man that God commanded the angels to adore; and the reception of this form itself is implied in one of the degrees of Islamic initiation.

are themselves an expression of complementarism[1]; if we depart from the special conditions inherent in manifestation (in successive mode), and consider them in simultaneity, they balance each other, so that their combination is really equivalent to the principial immutability, just as the sum of the partial disequilibriums by which all manifestation is realized always and invariably constitutes the total equilibrium.

There is one further point that must be mentioned. It was said just now that as the terms active and passive merely express a relationship, they may be applied at different levels; it follows that if we consider the three-dimensional cross, in which the vertical axis and the horizontal plane stand in this active-passive relationship, the same relationship can again be envisaged as between the two horizontal axes, or between what they respectively represent. In this case, in order to preserve the symbolical correspondence established in the first place, and although these axes are both actually horizontal, it is possible to say that one of them—the one that plays the active part—is relatively vertical in respect of the other. For example, if these two axes are regarded as being the solsticial and the equinoctial axis respectively, in accordance with the symbolism of the annual cycle, then the solsticial axis can be described as relatively vertical in relation to the equinoctial, so that in the horizontal plane it analogically plays the part of the polar axis (North-South), and the equinoctial will then play the part of equatorial axis (East-West).[2] Thus in its own plane the horizontal cross reproduces relationships analogous to those expressed by the vertical cross. To return at this point to the metaphysical symbolism which remains the essentially important one, it can thus be said that the integration of the human state, represented by the horizontal cross, is, in its own order of existence, a kind

[1] As indicated above, in the Hindu tradition this is expressed by the symbolism of the word *Hamsa*. In certain Tantrik texts there also occurs the word *aha* symbolizing the union of *Shiva* and *Shakti*, respectively represented by the first and last letters of the Sanskrit alphabet (just as in the Hebrew particle *eth* the *aleph* and the *thau* represent the "essence" and the "substance" of a being).

[2] This is especially applicable to the symbolism of the *swastika*, which will be discussed later.

of image of the actual totalization of the being, as represented by the vertical cross.[1]

[1] On the subject of complementarism it should also be noted that in the Arabic alphabet the two first letters, *alif* and *ba*, are regarded respectively as active or masculine and as passive or feminine; since the former is vertical in shape and the latter horizontal, their union forms the cross. Again, as the numerical values of these letters are respectively 1 and 2, this agrees with the Pythagorean arithmetical symbolism, according to which the "monad" is masculine and the "dyad" feminine. The same concordance is found in the Far-Eastern tradition: in the figures of the *K'ua* or "trigrams" of Fu-hsi, the *yang* (the masculine principle) is represented by a full line, and the *yin* (the feminine principle) by a broken line (or rather, one interrupted in the middle); these symbols, known as the "two determinations", suggest respectively the ideas of unity and duality; this, needless to say, as in Pythagoreanism itself, should be understood in a sense quite different from that of the mere system of "numeration" which Leibnitz thought he had discovered in them (see *East and West*, pp. 72–76). In a general way, according to the *Yi-King*, the odd numbers correspond to *yang* and the even numbers to *yin* (see *La Grande Triade*, chs. IV and VIII); The Pythagorean idea of odd and even seems to recur in what Plato calls the "same" and the "other", corresponding respectively to unity and duality, envisaged however exclusively in the manifested world. In Chinese numeration, the cross represents the number 10 (and the Roman X indeed is itself only the cross arranged differently); it is here possible to see an allusion to the relationship between the denary and the quaternary:— 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10, a relationship that was also depicted by the Pythagorean *Tetraktys*. Indeed, in the correspondence of geometrical figures to numbers, the cross naturally represents the quaternary; to be more exact, it represents it under its dynamic aspect, whereas the square represents it under its static aspect. The relation between these two aspects is expressed by the Hermetic problem of the "squaring of the circle", or, in the symbolism of three-dimensional geometry, by the relation between the sphere and the cube, to which reference has been made in connection with the shapes of the "earthly Paradise" and the "heavenly Jerusalem" (*Le Roi du Monde*, ch. XI, and *The Reign of Quantity*, ch. XX). Finally, on this subject, it should also be noted that in the number 10 the two digits 1 and 0 further correspond respectively to the active and the passive, represented by the centre and the circumference according to another symbolism (see *La Grande Triade*, ch. XXIII), which however can be attached to that of the cross if it is observed that the centre is the trace of the vertical axis on the horizontal plane in which the circumference must then be imagined as situated, and the latter will thus represent expansion in this same plane by one of the concentric waves whereby it takes place; the circle with the central point, the figure of the denary, is at the same time the symbol of cyclic perfection, i.e. of the integral realization of the possibilities implied in a state of existence.

CHAPTER VII

The Resolution of Opposites

The last chapter dealt with complements, not contraries; it is important not to confuse these two notions, as is done at times through taking complementarism for opposition. What may give rise to certain confusions in this respect is that the same things sometimes appear as either contrary or complementary according to the viewpoint adopted. In such cases, it can always be said that the viewpoint from which there is opposition is the lower or more superficial one, while that from which there is complementarism, with the opposition reconciled and already resolved, is the higher or profounder viewpoint, as has been explained elsewhere.[1] The principial unity in fact demands that there shall be no irreducible opposition[2]; accordingly, though opposition between two terms can indeed exist in appearance and can possess a relative reality at a certain level of existence, it is bound to disappear as such and to be harmoniously resolved, by synthesis or integration, when a higher level is attained. To deny this would be to seek to introduce a disequilibrium into the principial order itself, whereas, as was said before, all the disequilibriums that form the elements of manifestation, when they are regarded "distinctively", are yet bound to concur in the total equilibrium, which nothing can ever affect or destroy. Complementarism itself, which is still duality, must, at a certain degree, vanish in face of unity, its two terms being balanced and as it were neutralized when uniting to merge indissolubly in the primordial indifferentiation.

The figure of the cross may make it easier to appreciate the difference between complementarism and opposition. We

[1] *The Crisis of the Modern World*, ch. III.

[2] Consequently, any "dualism", whether of the theological order like that attributed to the Manichees, or of the philosophical order like that of Descartes, is a radically false conception.

have seen that the vertical and the horizontal can be taken as representing two complementary terms; but obviously the vertical and the horizontal cannot be said to oppose each other. What do clearly represent opposition, in the same figure, are the contrary directions of the two half-lines from the centre which form the two halves of one and the same axis, whichever one it may be; opposition may thus be equally conceived in either the vertical direction or the horizontal. In the vertical two-dimensional cross we shall also have two couples of opposed terms forming a quaternary; the same will be the case in the horizontal cross, one of whose axes may moreover be regarded as relatively vertical, that is, as playing the part of a vertical axis in respect of the other, as was explained at the end of the last chapter. If the two figures are combined to form the three-dimensional cross, we get three pairs of opposed terms, as has already been shown in connection with the directions of space and the cardinal points. It should be noted that one of the best-known quaternary oppositions, namely that of the elements and their corresponding sensible qualities, can properly be disposed as a horizontal cross; in this case, in fact, what is involved is solely the constitution of the corporeal world, which is entirely situated at one single degree of Existence and represents only a quite restricted portion of that. The same holds good when we consider only four cardinal points, which are then those of the terrestrial world, symbolically represented by the horizontal plane, whereas the Zenith and the Nadir, being opposed along the vertical axis, represent an orientation towards worlds that are respectively higher and lower than the terrestrial world. We have seen that this is likewise true for the double opposition of the solstices and the equinoxes, and this also is easy to understand, for the vertical axis, remaining fixed and motionless while all things rotate around it, is obviously independent of cyclic vicissitudes, which it thus governs as it were by its very immobility, the latter being an image of the principial immutability.[1] If the horizontal

[1] This is Aristotle's " motionless mover ", to which we have often referred elsewhere.

cross alone is considered, the vertical axis is there represented by the central point itself, which is the point at which this axis meets the horizontal plane; thus, in every horizontal plane, symbolizing a state or degree of Existence, this point —which may be called its centre since it is the origin of the system of co-ordinates to which every point in the plane can be referred—presents likewise an image of immutability. If this rule is applied, for instance, to the theory of the elements of the corporeal world, the centre will correspond to the fifth element, namely ether,[1] which is in reality the first of all in order of production, the one from which all the others proceed by successive differentiation, and the one that combines in itself all the opposing qualities that mark the other elements, in a state of indifferentiation and perfect equilibrium, corresponding in its own order to the principial non-manifestation.[2]

At the centre of the cross, therefore, all oppositions are reconciled and resolved; that is the point where the synthesis of all contrary terms is achieved, for really they are contrary only from the outward and particular viewpoints of knowledge in distinctive mode. This central point corresponds to what Moslem esotericism calls the "Divine station", namely "that which combines contrasts and antinomies" (*El-maqâmul-ilahi, huwa maqâm ijtimâ ed-diddaîn*[3]; in the Far-Eastern tradition, it is called the "Invariable Middle" (*Ching-Ying*), which is the place of perfect equilibrium, represented as the centre of the "cosmic wheel"[4], and is also, at the same time,

[1] This is the "quintessence" (*quinta essentia*) of the alchemists, sometimes represented, in the centre of the cross of the elements, by a figure such as a five-pointed star or a five-petalled flower. It is also said that ether has a "five-fold nature"; this should be understood of ether considered in itself and as principle of the other four elements.

[2] It is for these reasons that the term "ether" lends itself to the analogical transpositions pointed out earlier; it is then taken symbolically as a designation of the principial state itself.

[3] This "station" or degree of the being's effective realization, is attained by *El-fanâ*, i.e. by the "extinction" of the ego in the return to the "primordial state"; such "extinction", even as regards the literal meaning of the term denoting it, is not without analogy to the *Nirvâna* of the Buddhist doctrine. Beyond *El-fanâ*, there is still *Fanâ el-fanâi*, the "extinction of the extinction", which similarly corresponds to *Parinirvâna* (see *Man and his becoming*, ch. XIII). In a certain sense, the passage from one of these degrees to the other is related to the identification of the centre of a state of the being with that of the total being, as will be explained later.

[4] See *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. I and IV, and *L'Esotérisme de Dante*, 3rd edn., p. 62

the point where the "Activity of Heaven" is directly manifested.[1] This centre directs all things by its "actionless activity" (*wei wu-wei*), which although unmanifested, or rather because it is unmanifested, is in reality the plenitude of activity, since it is the activity of the Principle whence all particular activities are derived; this has been expressed by Lao-tze as follows: "The Principle is always actionless, yet everything is done by It."[2]

According to the Taoist doctrine, the perfect sage is he who has arrived at the central point and abides there in indissoluble union with the Principle, sharing Its immutability and imitating Its "actionless activity": "He who has reached the maximum of emptiness," says Lao-tze also, "shall be fixed steadfastly in repose . . . To return to one's root (that is, to the Principle, at once the first origin and last end of all beings),[3] is to enter into the state of repose."[4] The "emptiness" here in question is complete detachment from all manifested, transitory and contingent things[5]; by it the being escapes from the vicissitudes of the "stream of forms", from the alternation of the states of "life" and "death" or of "condensation" and "dissipation",[6] and passes from the circumference of the "cosmic wheel" to its centre, itself described as "the void (the unmanifest) which unites the spokes and makes them into a wheel".[7] "Peace in empti-

[1] Confucianism develops the idea of the "Invariable Middle" in the social order, whereas its purely metaphysical meaning is given by Taoism.

[2] *Tao-te-King*, XXXVII.

[3] The word *Tao*, literally "Way", which denotes the Principle, is represented by an ideographic character combining the signs for the head and the feet, and equivalent to the symbol of *alpha* and *omega* in the Western traditions.

[4] *Tao-te-King*, XVI.

[5] This detachment is identical with *El-fand*; compare also the teaching of the *Bhagavad-Gîta* on indifference towards the fruits of action, by which indifference the being escapes the indefinite chain of the action's results: this is "action without desire", whereas "action with desire" (*sakâma karma*) is action carried out with a view to its fruits.

[6] Aristotle, in a similar sense, speaks of "generation" and "corruption".

[7] *Tao-te-King*, XI. The simplest form of the wheel is the circle divided into four equal parts by the cross; apart from this four-spoked wheel, the most widespread forms in the symbolism of all peoples are the six- and eight-spoked wheels; naturally each of these numbers adds a particular nuance to the general significance of the wheel. The octagonal figure of the eight *Kua* or "trigrams" of Fu-hsi, one of the fundamental symbols of the Far-Eastern tradition, is in some respects equivalent to the eight-spoked wheel, as also to the eight-petalled lotus. In the ancient traditions of Central America, the world is always symbolised by a circle with a cross inscribed in it.

ness," says Lieh-tzu, " is an undefinable state ; it is neither taken nor given ; one comes to be established therein."[1] This " peace in emptiness " is the " Great Peace " of Moslem esotericism,[2] called in Arabic *Es-Sakînah*, a designation which identifies it with the Hebrew *Shekinah*, that is, the Divine Presence at the centre of the being, symbolically represented as the heart in all traditions.[3] This Divine Presence is in fact implied by union with the Principle, which cannot be effectively attained except at the very centre of the being. " To him that dwells in the Unmanifest, all beings manifest themselves . . . United with the Principle, he is thereby in harmony with all beings. United with the Principle, he knows all through general reasons of a higher order, and consequently no longer uses his various senses to know in particular and in detail. The true reason of things is invisible, ungraspable, undefinable, indeterminable. Only the spirit re-established in the state of perfect simplicity can attain it in profound contemplation.[4]

[1] *Lieh-tzu*, Ch. I. The texts of Lieh-tzu and of Ch'uang-tzu are quoted from the French translation of Father Wieger.

[2] This is also the *Pax Profunda* of the Rosicrucian tradition.

[3] See *Man and his becoming*, ch. XIII, and *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. III. It is said that *Allâh* " makes peace descend into the hearts of the faithful " (*Huwa elladhî anzala es-Sakînata fî qulûbil-mûminîn*) : and the Hebrew *Qabbalah* teaches exactly the same thing : " The *Shekinah* bears this name," says the Hebraist Louis Cappel, " because it dwells (*shakan*) in the heart of the faithful, which habitation was symbolized by the Tabernacle (*Mishkan*) where God is deemed to reside " (*Critica sacra*, p. 311, Amsterdam 1689, quoted by M. P. Vulliaud, *La Kabbale juive*, vol. I, p. 293). It need hardly be pointed out that the " descent " of " Peace " into the heart takes place down the vertical axis : it is the manifestation of the "Activity of Heaven ". See also, on the other hand, the teaching of the Hindu doctrine on the dwelling of *Brahma*, symbolized by ether, in the heart, i.e. at the vital centre of the human being (*Man and his becoming*, ch. III).

[4] *Lieh-tzu*, ch. IV. This shows the whole difference between the transcendent knowledge of the sage and ordinary or " profane " learning ; allusions to " simplicity ", an expression of the unification of all the powers of the being, and regarded as characteristic of the " primordial state ", are frequent in Taoism. Similarly, in the Hindu doctrine, the state of " childhood " (*bâlya*), taken in the spiritual sense, is regarded as a preliminary condition for acquiring true knowledge (see *Man and his becoming*, ch. XXIII). In this connection we may recall the similar sayings to be found in the Gospel : " Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein " (St. Luke xviii, 17) ; " While you have hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, you have revealed them to the simple and the little ones " (St. Matthew xi, 25 ; St. Luke x, 21). The central point, whereby communication with the higher or " heavenly " states is established, is the " strait gate " of the Gospel symbolism ; the

Placed at the centre of the " cosmic wheel ", the perfect sage moves it invisibly,[5] by his mere presence, without sharing in its movement, and without having to concern himself with exercising any action whatever: " The ideal is the indifference (detachment) of the transcendent man, who lets the cosmic wheel turn.[6] This absolute detachment renders him the master of all things, because, having passed beyond all oppositions inherent in multiplicity, he can no longer be affected by anything: " He has attained perfect impassibility; life and death are equally indifferent to him, the collapse of the (manifested) universe would cause him no emotion.[7] By dint of search, he has reached the immutable truth, the unique universal Principle. He lets all beings evolve according to their destinies, and himself stands at the motionless centre of all destinies[8] . . . The outward sign of this inner state is imperturbability: not that of the hero who hurls himself alone, for love of glory, against an army in line of battle, but that of the spirit which, higher than heaven. earth and all beings,[9] dwells in a body to which it is indifferent,[10]

" rich " who cannot enter are the beings attached to multiplicity, and consequently incapable of raising themselves from distinctive to unified knowledge. " Spiritual poverty ", which is detachment in regard to manifestation, here appears as another symbol equivalent to that of " childhood " : " Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven " (St. Matthew x, 2). This " poverty " (in Arabic *El-faqru*) likewise plays an important part in Moslem esotericism; apart from what has just been said, it also implies the being's complete dependence, in all that he is, on the Principle, " outside of which there is nothing, absolutely nothing that exists " (Mohyiddin ibn Arabi, *Risâlatul-Ahadiyah*).

[5] The same idea is expressed in the Hindu tradition by the term *Chakra, varti*, literally " he who makes the wheel to turn " (see *Le Roi du Monde*- ch. II, *L'Esotérisme de Dante*, 3rd edn., p. 35, and *The Reign of Quantity*, p. 325).

[6] *Ch'uang-tzu*, ch. I. Cf. *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. IX.

[7] Despite the apparent resemblance of certain expressions, this " impassibility " is quite different from that of the Stoics, which was solely of a " moral " order, and moreover seems to have never been more than a mere theoretical conception.

[8] According to the traditional commentary on the *Yi-King*, " the word ' destiny ' denotes the true *raison d'être* of things; the ' centre ' of all destinies' is thus the Principle inasmuch as all beings have in it their sufficient cause.

[9] The Principle or " Centre ", in fact, is prior to all distinction, including that of " Heaven " (*Tien*) and " Earth " (*Ti*), which represents the first duality, these two terms being the equivalents of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* respectively.

[10] This is the *jîvan-mukta* (see *Man and his becoming*, ch. XXIV).

taking no account of what its senses convey to it, and knowing all by global knowledge in its motionless unity.[1] That spirit, absolutely independent, is the master of men; if he cared to call them all together in their multitude, they would all rally on the appointed day; but he has no desire for their service".[2]

At the central point, all oppositions inherent in more external points of view are transcended; all oppositions have disappeared and are resolved in a perfect equilibrium. "In the primordial state, these oppositions did not exist. They are all derived from the diversification of beings (inherent in manifestation and contingent like it), and from their contacts caused by the universal gyration.[3] They would cease, if the diversity and the movement ceased. They cease forthwith to affect the being who has reduced his distinct ego and his particular movement to almost nothing.[4] Such a being no longer comes into conflict with any other being, because he is established in the infinite, effaced in the indefinite.[5] He has reached the starting-point of all transformations, the neutral point at which there are no conflicts, and there he abides. By concentration of his nature, by nourishment of his vital spirit, by re-assembly of all his powers, he is united to the principle of all births. His nature being whole (synthetically totalized in the principial unity), his vital spirit being intact, no being can harm him".[6]

[1] Cf. the condition of *Prâjna* in the Hindu doctrine (*ibid.*, ch. XV).

[2] *Ch'uang-tzu*, ch. V. The independence of one who, detached from all contingent things, has arrived at knowledge of the immutable truth, is likewise affirmed by the Gospel: "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (S. John viii, 31). One might also find a parallel with the above in another Gospel saying: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you" (S. Matt vi, 33; St. Luke xii, 31). Here we must remember the close connection between the idea of justice and those of balance and harmony; for the relationship that unites justice and peace, see *Le Roi du Monde*, chs. I and VI; *Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel*, ch. VIII).

[3] i.e. by rotation of the "cosmic wheel" about its axis.

[4] This reduction of the "distinct ego", which finally disappears by re-absorbing itself into one single point, is the same thing as the "emptiness" referred to earlier; it is also the *El-fanâ* of Moslem esotericism. It is clear from the symbolism of the wheel that the "movement of a being becomes less and less the nearer he approaches to the centre".

[5] The first of these expressions refers to the "Personality" and the second to the "individuality".

[6] *Ch'uang-tzu*, ch. XIX. The last sentence again refers to the conditions of the "primordial state": it is what the Judaeo-Christian tradition denotes as the immortality of man before the "fall", an immortality regained by him who reaches the "Centre of the World" and eats of the "Tree of Life"

This central, primordial point is identical with the " Holy Palace " of the Hebrew *Qabbalah* ; in itself it has no situation, for it is wholly independent of space, which is merely the result of its expansion or indefinite development in every direction, and which accordingly proceeds entirely from it : " Let us but transport ourselves in spirit outside this world of dimensions and localizations, and there will no longer be need to seek the abode of the Principle ".[1] But once space is realized, the primordial point, while always remaining essentially " unlocalized " (for it cannot be affected or modified by anything whatsoever), makes itself the centre thereof (that is to say, transposing the symbolism, the centre of universal manifestation), as we have already shown. From this point start the six directions, which, as pairs of opposites, represent all contraries, and to it also they return, by the alternating movements of expansion and contraction which constitute the two complementary phases of all manifestation. It is the second of these phases, the movement of return towards the origin, that marks the way followed by the sage to reach union with the Principle : the " concentration of his nature ", the " re-assembly of all his powers ", in the text just quoted, indicate this as clearly as possible ; and the " simplicity " to which reference has also been made corresponds to the unity "without dimensions" of the primordial point. " The absolutely simple man sways all beings by his simplicity . . . so that nothing opposes him in the six regions of space, nothing is hostile to him, and fire and water do not harm him.[2] In fact, he stands at the centre, from which the six directions have issued by radiation, and on returning to which they become neutralized, so that at this unique point their threefold opposition ceases entirely and nothing that springs therefrom or resides therein can touch the being who dwells there in immutable unity. Opposing nothing, he can likewise be opposed by nothing, for opposition is necessarily a reciprocal relationship, which requires the presence of two terms and is therefore incompatible with the principial Unity ; and hostility, which is only a consequence or an outward manifestation of opposition, cannot exist.

[1] Id., ch. XXII. [2] *Lieh-tzu*, ch. II.

towards a being who is beyond all opposition. Fire and water, types of contraries in the "elemental world", cannot harm him, for in truth they no longer exist for him *quâ* contraries, since by balancing and neutralizing each other by a union of their apparently opposed but really complementary qualities,[1] they have re-entered the indifferentiation of the primordial ether.

For the being who stands at the centre, all is unified, for he sees all in the unity of the Principle. All particular (or if preferred, "particularist") and analytical viewpoints, which are founded only on contingent distinctions and which give rise to all the divergence of individual opinions, have disappeared for him and are reabsorbed into the total synthesis of transcendent knowledge, which is the same as the one and changeless truth. "His viewpoint is one at which this and that, yes and no, appear still in a state of non-distinction. This point is the Pivot of the Law; it is the motionless centre of a circumference on the rim of which all contingencies, distinctions and individualities revolve; and from it only Infinity is to be seen, which is neither this nor that, nor yes nor no. To see all in the yet undifferentiated primordial unity, or from such a distance that all melts into one, this is true intelligence".[2] The "Pivot of the Law" is what almost all traditions refer to as the "Pole",[3] that is, as has already been explained, the fixed point around which all the revolutions of the world are accomplished and which is itself the direct emanation of the centre, in other words the expression in the cosmic order[4] of the "Will of Heaven".

[1] Fire and water, envisaged no longer under the aspect of opposition but under that of complementarism, are one of the expressions of the two principles, active and passive, in the domain of corporeal or sensible manifestation; the considerations relating to this viewpoint have been more especially developed by Hermetism.

[2] *Ch'uang-tzu*, ch. II.

[3] We have studied this symbolism particularly in *Le Roi du Monde*. In the Far-Eastern tradition, the "Great Unity" (*Tai-i*) is represented as residing in the pole star, which is called *Tien-ki*, i.e. literally "roof of Heaven".

[4] "Uprightness" (*Te*), whose name recalls the idea of the straight line, and more particularly that of the "World Axis", is, in the doctrine of Lao-tze, what might be called a "specification" of the "Way" (*Tao*), in regard to a given being or state of existence: it is the direction that being must follow in order that his existence may be according to the "Way", or, in other words, in conformity with the Principle (in the upward direction, whereas the descending direction is that in which the "Activity of Heaven" is exerted). This may be compared with what we have indicated elsewhere (*Le Roi du Monde*, ch. VIII) on the subject of ritual orientation, with which we shall deal again later. (Cf. also *La Grande Triade*, ch. VII.—Translator).

CHAPTER VIII

War and Peace

What has just been said about the "peace" that dwells at the central point, brings us to another symbolism, namely that of war, to which some allusions have already been made elsewhere.[1] A well-known example of this symbolism is found in the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*; the battle described in that book represents action in a quite general sense, and in a form suited to the nature and function of the *Kshatriyas* for whom it is more particularly intended.[2] The battlefield (*kshetra*) is the domain of action in which the individual develops his possibilities; it is depicted by the horizontal plane in the geometrical symbolism. Here, the human state is in question, but the same representation could be applied to any other state of manifestation equally subject, either to action properly so called, or at least to change and multiplicity. This conception is not peculiar to the Hindu doctrine, but is also found in the Islamic, for this is the real meaning of "holy war" (*jihâd*). The social and outward application is only secondary, as clearly appears from the fact that it is referred to only as the "lesser holy war" (*El-jihâdul-asghar*),

[1] *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. X; *Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel*, chs. III and VIII.

[2] Krishna and Arjuna, who represent the "Self" and the "ego", or the "Personality" and the "individuality", *Atmâ* unconditioned and *jivâtmâ*, are riding in the same chariot, which is the "vehicle" of the being when considered in its state of manifestation. While Arjuna fights, Krishna drives the chariot without fighting, in other words without himself being engaged in action. Other symbols having a similar meaning are found in several texts of the *Upanishads*: the "two birds who dwell on the same tree" (*Mundaka Upanishad*, 3rd *Mundaka*, 1st Khanda, shruti 1; *Shwetashwatara Upanishad*, 4th Adhyaya, shruti 6) and also "the two who have entered the cave" *Upanishad*, 1st Adyaya, 3rd Valli, shruti 1. The "cave" is the same thing as the cavity of the heart, which represents the place of union of the individual with the Universal, or of the "ego" with the "Self" (see *Man and his becoming*, ch. III). In the same sense, El-Hallaj says: "We are two spirits conjoined in one and the same body" (*nahnu ruhâni halalnâ badana*).

whereas the "greater holy war" (*El-jihâdul-akbar*) is of a purely inward and spiritual order.[1]

From whatever aspect and in whatever domain war is envisaged, one may say that the essential reason for its existence is to put a stop to disorder and to restore order. In other terms, it is concerned with the unification of multiplicity by means which belong to the world of multiplicity itself: in this light, and in this light alone, can war be regarded as legitimate. Disorder is in a sense inherent in all manifestation, for manifestation, considered apart from its principle, that is to say as non-unified multiplicity, is nothing but an indefinite series of ruptures of equilibrium. Accordingly if war is understood in this sense, and is not given an exclusively human meaning, it represents a cosmic process whereby what is manifested is re-integrated into the principial unity; that is why, from the viewpoint of manifestation itself, this re-integration appears as a destruction, and this emerges very clearly from certain aspects of the symbolism of *Shiva* in the Hindu doctrine.

If it be argued that war itself is also a disorder, this is true in a certain respect, and even necessarily true by the very fact that war is waged in the world of manifestation and multiplicity. But it is a disorder intended to balance another disorder, and according to the teaching of the Far-Eastern tradition, previously mentioned, it is the sum of all disorders or disequilibriums that constitutes the total order. Furthermore, order only appears when a standpoint is taken that is above multiplicity and from which things are no longer seen in isolation and "distinctively", but in their essential unity. This is the standpoint of reality, for apart from its principle multiplicity has only an illusory existence; but that illusion, with the disorder inherent in it, endures for every being so long as he has not arrived in a fully effective manner (and not merely theoretically) at this standpoint of the "unity of Existence" (*Wahdatul-wujûd*) in all the modes and degrees of universal manifestation.

[1] This rests on a *hadîth* of the Prophet, who, on returning from a war-like expedition, spoke as follows: "We have returned from the lesser holy war to the grea er holy war" (*rajand min el-jihddil-asghar ilâ el-jihddil-akbar*).

Accordingly, the end of war is the establishment of peace, for peace, even taken in its most ordinary sense, is ultimately nothing else but order, equilibrium or harmony, these three terms being practically synonymous, and all denoting under somewhat different aspects the reflection of unity in multiplicity. In point of fact, multiplicity is not really destroyed but "transformed"; and when all things are brought back to unity, this unity appears in all things, which, far from ceasing to exist, thereby acquire on the contrary the plenitude of reality. In this way, the two complementary viewpoints of "unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity" (*El-wahdatu fīl-kuthrati wal-kuthratu fīl-wahdati*) are indivisibly united at the central point of all manifestation, which is the "Divine Abode" or "Divine Station" (*El-maqāmul-ilahī*), already mentioned above. For whoever has reached that point, there are no longer any contraries, and therefore no longer any disorder; it is the seat of order, of equilibrium, and of harmony or peace; outside it for one who is merely striving towards it without having yet reached it, there prevails a state of war such as we have described, since the oppositions in which disorder resides have not yet been permanently transcended.

Even in its outward and social sense, legitimate war, which is waged against the disturbers of order and is aimed at reimposing order upon them, is essentially a function of "justice", or in other words a "balancing" function,[1] whatever the secondary and transient appearances may suggest; but this is only the "lesser holy war", which is a mere image of the other, the "greater holy war". Here we would refer to what we have said regarding the symbolical value of historical facts, which can be regarded as representing in their own sphere realities of a higher order.

The "greater holy war" is man's struggle against the enemies he carries within himself, that is, against the elements in him that are opposed to order and unity. There is however no question of annihilating these elements, which, like everything that exists, have their reason for existence and their

[1] See *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. VI.

place in the whole; what is aimed at is to "transform" them, by bringing them back and as it were reabsorbing them into unity. Above all else, man must constantly strive to realize unity in himself, in all that constitutes him, through all the modalities of his human manifestation: unity of thought, unity of action, and also, which is perhaps hardest, unity between thought and action. As regards action, it is important to observe that it is the intention (*niyyah*) which counts for most, for this alone depends wholly on man himself, without being affected or modified by outward contingencies as the results of action always are. Unity in intention and the constant tendency towards the invariable and immutable centre[1] are symbolically represented by ritual orientation (*qiblah*), the earthly spiritual centres being as it were visible images of the true and only centre of all manifestation. This centre, as already explained, has its direct reflection in all the worlds, at the central point of each of them, and also in all beings, in whom this central point is symbolically denoted as the heart, because of its correspondence to the heart in the bodily organism.

For whoever has achieved the perfect realization of unity in himself, all opposition has ceased and with it the state of war, for from the standpoint of totality, which lies beyond all particular standpoints, nothing remains but absolute order. Nothing can thereafter harm such a being, since for him there are no longer any enemies, either within him or without; the unity achieved within is also reflected outwardly, or rather, there is no longer in this case either "within" or "without", since this is simply one of the oppositions which "vanish at his glance".[2] Permanently established at the centre of all things, he "is unto himself his own law",[3]

[1] With regard to "right intention" and "good will", see *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. III and VIII.

[2] This "glance", according to the Hindu tradition, is that of the third eye of *Shiva*, which represents the "sense of eternity", and the effective possession of which is essentially implied in the restoration of the "primordial state" (see *Man and his becoming*, ch. XX, and *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. V and VII).

[3] This expression is borrowed from Islamic esotericism; in the same sense, the Hindu doctrine speaks of the being who has reached that state as *swêchchâchârî*, i.e. "accomplishing his own will".

because his will is one with the universal Will (the " Will of Heaven " of the Far-Eastern tradition, which effectively manifests itself at the very point where that being resides) ; he has obtained the " Great Peace ", which is none other than the " Divine Presence " (*Es-Ṣakīnah*, the immanence of the Divinity at that point which is the " Centre of the World ") ; being identified, by his own unification, with the principial unity itself, he sees unity in all things and all things in unity, in the absolute simultaneity of the Eternal Present.

CHAPTER IX

The Tree in the Midst

Another aspect of the symbolism of the cross identifies it with what various Traditions describe as the "Tree in the Midst" or some equivalent term. It has been shown elsewhere that this tree is one of the numerous symbols of the "World Axis".[1] It is therefore the vertical line of the cross, which represents this axis, that we must chiefly consider here: this line forms the trunk of the tree, whereas the horizontal line (or the two horizontal lines in the case of the three-dimensional cross) forms its branches. This tree stands at the centre of the world, or rather of a world, that is, of a domain in which a state of existence, such as the human state, is developed. In the Biblical symbolism for example, the Tree of Life, planted in the midst of the earthly Paradise, represents the centre of our world, as has been explained on other occasions.[2] Although we have no intention of examining the symbolism of the tree in all its aspects, there are nevertheless a number of points connected with it which are relevant to the present subject.

In the earthly Paradise, there was not only the "Tree of Life"; there was another tree which plays a no less important and even better known part, namely the "Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil".[3] It is said that the latter was likewise "in the midst of the garden"[4]; and finally, after having eaten of the fruit of the "Tree of Knowledge",[5]

[1] *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. II; on the "World Tree" and its different forms, see also *Man and his becoming*, p. 68. In Moslem esotericism, there is a treatise by Mohyiddin ibn Arabi entitled The World Tree (*Shajaratul-Kawn*).

[2] *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. V and IX; *Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel*, ch. V and VIII.

[3] On the vegetable symbolism in relation to the earthly Paradise, see *L'Esotérisme de Dante*, ch. IX, and *The Reign of Quantity*, ch. XX.

[4] *Genesis* ii, 9.

[5] *Ibid.*, iii, 3.

Adam would only have had to stretch out his hand to take also of the fruit of the "Tree of Life".[1] In the second of these three passages, the ban imposed by God relates solely to "the tree in the midst of the garden", which is not otherwise specified; but if we refer to the other passage where the ban has already been imposed,[2] we see that it is clearly the "Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil" which is meant in both cases. It is doubtless the bond established by this proximity that causes the two trees to be closely united in symbolism; in fact certain emblematic trees have features that recall both trees at once; but it remains to explain in what this bond consists.

The nature of the "Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil", as its name implies, is characterized by duality, for in this name there are two terms which are not even complementary but in truth opposed; indeed it can be said that their whole *raison d'être* lies in this opposition, for once it is transcended there can no longer be any question of good or evil. The same cannot be said of the Tree of Life, which on the contrary, in its function of World Axis, essentially implies unity. Accordingly, whenever one finds an image of duality in a tree, the implication is that the Tree of Knowledge is being alluded to, even though in other respects the symbol considered may undeniably be a figure of the Tree of Life. This is so, for instance, with the "Sephirothic tree" of the Hebrew Qabbalah, which is expressly termed the Tree of Life, yet in which the "right-hand column" and the "left-hand column" provide a representation of duality; but between the two stands the "middle column", in which the two opposing tendencies are balanced, and the unity of the Tree of Life thus restored.[3]

The dual nature of the Tree of Knowledge moreover appears to Adam only at the very moment of the Fall, since

[1] *Ibid.*, iii, 22.
[2] *Ibid.*, ii, 17.
[3] On the subject of the "Sephirothic tree", see *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. III. Similarly, in medieval symbolism, the "tree of the living and the dead", with its two sides whose fruits represent good and bad works respectively, clearly resembles the "Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil"; while its trunk, which is Christ Himself, identifies it with the Tree of Life.

it is then that he becomes "knowing good and evil".[1] It is then too that he finds himself driven out from the centre which is the place of the Primal unity to which the Tree of Life corresponds; and it is precisely "to keep the way of the Tree of Life" that the Cherubim ("tetramorphs" synthetizing the quaternary of elemental powers), armed with flaming swords, are set at the entrance to Eden.[2] This centre has become inaccessible to fallen man, who has lost the "sense of eternity", which is also the "sense of unity"[3]; to return to the centre, by the restoration of the Primordial State, and to reach the Tree of Life, is to regain the "sense of eternity".

Moreover, we know that the cross of Christ is itself symbolically identified with the Tree of Life (*lignum vitæ*), for reasons that are readily understandable; but according to a "legend of the Cross" current in the Middle Ages, the Cross was made of the wood of the Tree of Knowledge, so that the latter, after being the instrument of the Fall, thus became that of the Redemption. Here we find expressed a connection between the two ideas of "fall" and "redemption" which are in some respects opposed to each other, and there is also an allusion to the re-establishment of the Primordial State[4]; in this new guise, the Tree of Knowledge is in a certain sense assimilated to the Tree of Life, duality being effectively reintegrated into unity.[5]

[1] *Genesis* iii, 22. When "their eyes were opened", Adam and Eve covered themselves with fig-leaves (*ibid.* iii, 7). It may be noted that in the Hindu tradition the "World Tree" is represented by the fig; the part that the same tree plays in the Gospel will also be remembered.

[2] *Ibid.*, iii, 22.

[3] Cf. *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. V.

[4] This symbolism is connected with what St. Paul says of the two Adams (I Cor. xv). The depiction of Adam's skull at the foot of the cross, after a legend according to which he was buried at Golgotha itself ("the place of the skull"), is only another symbolic expression of the same relationship.

[5] It is noteworthy that the cross, in its ordinary form, is found in Egyptian hieroglyphs where it has the meaning of "health" (for instance in the name of Ptolemy *Soter*). This sign is quite distinct from the *crux ansata* or "looped cross" (*ankh*), which for its part expresses the idea of "life", and which was frequently used as a symbol by the Christians of the first two centuries. It is a question whether the first of these two hieroglyphics has not a certain connection with the representation of the Tree of Life, and this would link together these two different forms of the cross, since their meaning would thus be partly identical; in any case, there is an obvious connection between the ideas of "life" and "health".

One may mention here the " brazen serpent " which was raised by Moses in the desert,[1] and which is also known to be a symbol of Redemption; in this case the perch on which it was placed is equivalent to the cross and also recalls the Tree of Life.[2] However, the serpent is most commonly associated with the Tree of Knowledge, in which case it is regarded under its maleficent aspect: in fact symbols often have two opposed meanings, as has been shown elsewhere.[3] The serpent that represents life must not be confused with the one representing death, nor the serpent that is a symbol of Christ with the one symbolising Satan (even when they are so closely combined as they are in the curious figure of the *amphisboena* or two-headed serpent). It may be added that the relationship of these two contrary aspects is not without a certain likeness to that of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge.[4]

We saw just now that a tree of ternary form, such as the " Sephirothic tree ", may in a certain manner synthesize in itself the natures of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge, combining them into a single whole, since the ternary can be split into the unity and the duality of which it is the sum.[5] Instead of one single tree, one sometimes finds three trees joined by their roots, the one in the middle being the Tree of Life and the other two corresponding to the duality of the Tree of Knowledge. Something similar is to be found in the depiction of the cross of Christ standing between the two crosses of the good and bad thief: these are set respectively to the right and left of Christ crucified, as the elect and the damned will be at the " Last Judgment ". While they obviously represent good and evil, they also correspond, in relation to Christ, to " Mercy " and " Rigour ", the characteristic attributes of the two lateral columns of the

[1] *Numbers* xxi.

[2] The staff of Aesculapius has a similar meaning; in the caduceus of Hermes, we see the two serpents in opposition, corresponding to the double meaning of the symbol.

[3] *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. III.

[4] A serpent coiled round a tree (or round a staff) is a symbol met with in most traditions; we shall see later what its meaning is from the viewpoint of the geometrical representation of the being and its states.

[5] A passage in Honoré d'Urfé's *Astrée* mentions a tree with three shoots, after a tradition which would seem to be of Druidic origin.

" Sephirothic tree ". The cross of Christ always occupies the central place which properly belongs to the Tree of Life ; and when it is placed between the sun and moon, as it is in most early representations, the same still holds good : it is then truly the World Axis.[1]

In Chinese symbolism, there is a tree with branches joined together at their extremities two by two, which depicts the synthesis of contraries, or the resolution of duality in unity. Sometimes we find a single tree with its branches dividing and rejoining, or there may be two trees having the same root and likewise joined by their branches.[2] They depict the process of universal manifestation : everything starts from unity and returns to unity ; in the interim there is duality, the division or differentiation from which manifested existence results ; the ideas of unity and duality are thus combined here as in the previous representations.[3]

There also exist representations of two distinct trees joined by a single branch (this is known as the " linked tree "). In this case, a small branch issues from the common branch, which clearly shows that we are concerned with two complementary principles and the product of their union. This product may be taken as representing universal manifestation, the result of the union of " Heaven " and " Earth " (the Far-Eastern equivalents of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*), or of the reciprocal action and reaction of *yang* and *yin*, the masculine

[1] This identification of the cross with the World Axis is explicitly stated in the device of the Carthusians : " *Stat Crux dum volvitur orbis* ". Cf. the symbol of the Globe of the World in which the cross surmounts the pole and again holds the place of the axis (see *L'Esotérisme de Dante*, ch. VIII).

[2] These two forms are met with in particular on *Han* period bas-reliefs.

[3] The tree in question bears three-lobed leaves attached to two branches at once, and at the end of its branches are chalice-shaped flowers ; birds fly round or perch on the tree. On the connection between the symbolism of birds and that of the tree in different traditions, see *Man and his becoming*, ch. III, where various texts from the *Upanishads* and the Gospel parable of the grain of mustard seed are quoted. A further example, taken from the Scandinavian tradition, is provided by the two crows, Odin's messengers, who alight on the ash *Ygdrasil*, which is one of the forms of the World Tree. In the medieval symbolism, birds are again found on the tree *Peridexion*, at the foot of which there is a dragon ; the name of this tree is a corruption of *Paradision*, and it may seem rather strange that it should have been thus deformed, as if people had ceased to understand it at a certain moment.

and feminine elements which all beings proceed from and participate in, and whose combination in perfect equilibrium constitutes (or reconstitutes) the primordial "Androgyne".[1]

To return to the representation of the Earthly Paradise: from its centre, that is, from the very foot of the Tree of Life, spring four rivers flowing towards the four cardinal points and thus tracing the horizontal cross on the surface of the terrestrial world, that is to say on the plane which corresponds to the domain of the human state. These four rivers, which can be related to the quaternary of the elements[2] and which issue from a single source corresponding to the primordial ether,[3] divide into four parts (corresponding to

[1] Instead of the "linked tree", we sometimes also find two rocks joined in the same way; there is in any case a close connection between the tree and the rock (equivalent to the mountain) as symbols of the World Axis; and in a still more general way, there is a constant parallel between the stone and the tree in most traditions.

[2] The *Qabbalah* makes these four rivers correspond to the letters of which the word PaRDeS is formed.

[3] According to the tradition of the *Fedeli d'Amore*, this source is the Fountain of Youth (*fons juventutis*), always represented as situated at the foot of a tree; its waters are thus assimilable to the Draught of Immortality (the *amrita* of the Hindu tradition); the relation of the Tree of Life to the Vedic *Soma* and the Mazdeic *Haoma* are also evident, (cf. *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. IV and V). In this connection we would also recall the "Dew of Light" which according to the Hebrew *Qabbalah* emanates from the Tree of Life and by which the resurrection of the dead is brought about (see *ibid.*, ch. III); dew likewise plays an important part in Hermetic symbolism. In the Far-Eastern traditions, mention is also made of the "Tree of Sweet Dew", situated on Mt. *Kouen-Lun*, which is often taken as an equivalent of *Meru* the "polar" mountain, and the other holy mountains (the mountain, like the tree, being a symbol of the World Axis as already stated). According to the same tradition of the *Fedeli d'Amore* (see Luigi Valli, *Il Linguaggio segreto di Dante e dei "Fedeli d'Amore"*), this source is also the Fount of Doctrine, which is connected with the preservation of the primordial Tradition at the spiritual centre of the world; we thus find here, between the Primordial State and the Primordial Tradition, the link indicated elsewhere on the subject of the symbolism of the Holy Grail, regarded under the double aspect of cup and book (*Le Roi du Monde*, ch. V). One may further recall the representation, in Christian symbolism, of the lamb on the book sealed with seven seals, upon the mountain from which the four rivers descend (see *ibid.*, ch. IX); the connection between the symbolism of the Tree of Life and that of the Book of Life will be explained later. Another symbolism which gives rise to interesting parallels is found among certain peoples of Central America, who "at the intersection of two perpendicular diameters traced in a circle, place the sacred cactus, *peyotl* or *hicouri*, symbolizing the Cup of Immortality, and thus deemed to be situated at the centre of a hollow sphere and at the centre of the world" (A. Rouhier, *Le Peyotl*, p. 154). Cf. also, in correspondence with the four rivers, the four sacrificial cups of the *Ribhus* in the *Vêda*.

the four phases of a cyclic development[1]) the circular precinct of the Earthly Paradise, which can be regarded as the horizontal section of the spherical form previously referred to as representing the Universe.[2]

The Tree of Life stands at the centre of the Heavenly Jerusalem, which requires no explanation in view of the relationship of the latter to the Earthly Paradise[3]: this indicates the reintegration of all things into the Primordial State, by virtue of the correspondence between the end of a cycle and its beginning, as will be explained more fully later. It is noteworthy that in the symbolism of the Apocalypse this tree bears twelve fruits,[4] which are assimilable to the twelve *Adityas* of the Hindu tradition.[5] The latter are twelve forms of the sun which will appear simultaneously at the end of the cycle, thus re-entering into the essential unity of their common nature, for they are so many manifestations of one single indivisible essence, *Aditi*, which corresponds to the one essence of the Tree of Life itself, whereas *Diti* corresponds to the dual essence of the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil.[6] Moreover, in various traditions, an image of the sun is often linked with that of a tree, as though the sun were the fruit of the World Tree; it leaves the tree at the beginning of the cycle and comes back to alight on it again at the end.[7] In the Chinese ideograms, the character

[1] See *L'Esotérisme de Dante*, ch. VIII, where, *à propos* of the "old man of Crete", who represents the four ages of humanity, we have indicated the existence of an analogical connection between the four rivers of Hades and those of the earthly Paradise.

[2] See *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. XI.

[3] See also *ibid.*, ch. XI. The shape of the Heavenly Jerusalem is not circular but square, final equilibrium having now been attained for the cycle in question (see *The Reign of Quantity*, ch. XX and pp. 194–5).

[4] The fruits of the Tree of Life are the golden apples of the garden of the Hesperides; the golden fleece of the Argonauts, likewise placed on a tree guarded by a serpent or dragon, is another symbol of the immortality which man has to regain.

[5] See *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. IV and XI.

[6] The *Devas*, assimilated to the *Adityas*, are said to have issued from *Aditi* (indivisibility); from *Diti* (division) issue the *Daityas* or *Asuras*. *Aditi* is also, in a certain sense, "primordial Nature", called in Arabic *El-Fitrah*.

[7] This is not unconnected with the transfer of the names of certain polar constellations to zodiacal ones and *vice versa* (*Le Roi du Monde*, ch. X). In a certain sense, the sun may be called the "son of the Pole"; hence the priority of the "polar" symbolism over the "solar".

denoting sunset shows the sun reposing on a tree at the end of the day (analogous to the end of the cycle); darkness is represented by a character depicting the sun fallen at the foot of a tree. In India, we find the triple tree bearing three suns, an image of the *Trimurtî*, as also the tree having as its fruit twelve suns, which, as was just said, are related, like the *Adityas*, to the twelve signs of the Zodiac or the twelve months of the year; sometimes there are ten suns, ten being the number of cyclic perfection as in the Pythagorean doctrine.[1] In general, the different suns correspond to the different phases of the cycle; they emerge from unity at the beginning of the cycle and re-enter it at the end, which coincides with the beginning of another cycle by reason of the continuity of all modes of universal Existence.[2]

[1] Cf., in the Hindu doctrine, the ten *Avatâras* that manifest themselves during the course of a *Manvantara*.

[2] Among the peoples of Central America, the four ages into which the great cyclic period is divided are regarded as ruled by four different suns, the names of which are drawn from their correspondence with the four elements.

CHAPTER X

The Swastika

One of the most striking forms of the "horizontal" cross, that is, the cross traced in the plane which represents a certain degree of existence, is the figure of the *swastika*, which indeed seems to be directly attached to the primordial Tradition, for it is found in the most diverse and widely separated countries, and from the most remote periods. Far from being an exclusively Eastern symbol as is sometimes thought, it is one of those most generally distributed, from the Far East to the Far West, for it exists even among certain indigenous peoples of America.[1] It is true that at the present day it has been preserved more especially in India and central and eastern Asia, and that perhaps those are the only regions where its meaning is still known; yet even in Europe it has not wholly disappeared.[2] In antiquity this sign occurs

[1] We came across a report quite recently which would seem to indicate that the traditions of ancient America are not as completely lost as is supposed; the writer of the article in which we found it has probably not realised its full scope. Here is the passage: "In 1925, a large part of the Cuna Indians rose, killed the Panama police who were living on their land, and founded the independent republic of *Tulé*, whose flag is a swastika on an orange field with a red border. This republic still exists at the present moment" (*Les Indiens de l'Isthme de Panama*, by G. Grandidier: *Journal des Débats*, 22 January, 1929). Note especially the association of the *swastika* with the name *Tulé* or *Tula*, which is one of the most ancient designations for the supreme spiritual centre and is applied also to some of the subordinate centres (see *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. X).

[2] In Lithuania and Kurland the peasants still trace this sign on their houses. Doubtless they no longer know its meaning, and see no more in it than a sort of protective talisman; but perhaps the most curious thing is that they give it its Sanskrit name, *swastika*. Lithuanian moreover is the European language most resembling Sanskrit. We completely pass over, needless to say, the artificial and even anti-traditional use of the *swastika* by the German "racialists", who have given it the fantastic and somewhat ridiculous title of *Hakenkreuz* or "hooked cross", and quite arbitrarily made it a sign of anti-semitism, on the pretext that this emblem must have belonged to the so-called "Aryan race". In this connection we would also point out that the denomination *crux gammada*, which is often given to the *swastika* in the West on account of the resemblance of its branches'

among the Celts and in pre-Hellenic Greece[3]; again, in the West, it was anciently one of the emblems of Christ, and it even remained in use as such down to nearly the end of the Middle Ages.[4]

We have said elsewhere that the *swastika* is essentially the "sign of the Pole.[5] If it is compared with the figure of the cross inscribed in the circumference of a circle, it will be seen that these are really equivalent symbols in certain respects; but in the *swastika* the rotation round the fixed centre, instead of being represented by the circumference, is merely indicated by short lines joined to the ends of the arms of the cross and forming right angles with them; these lines are tangents to the circumference which mark the direction of movement at the corresponding points. As the circumference represents the manifested world, the fact that it is as it were "suggested" (or "understood") indicates quite clearly that the *swastika* is not a symbol of the world, but rather of the Principle's action upon the world.

If we relate the *swastika* to the rotation of a sphere, such as the heavenly sphere, upon its axis, it must be supposed as

shape to that of the Greek letter *gamma*, is equally erroneous; in reality the signs anciently called *gammadia* were quite different, although sometimes in fact found more or less closely associated with the *swastika* in the first centuries of Christianity. One of these signs, also known as the "cross of the Word", is formed of 4 *gammas* with their corners pointing inwards towards the centre; the inner portion of the figure is cruciform and represents Christ, and the 4 *gammas* at the corners the 4 Evangelists; this figure is thus equivalent to the well-known representation of Christ in the middle of the 4 "living creatures". Another arrangement is found in which a central cross is surrounded by 4 *gammas* placed in square form (with the corners turned outwards instead of inwards); this figure has the same meaning as the foregoing. Without dwelling further on it, we would add that these signs place the symbolism of the mason's and carpenter's square (whose shape is that of the *gamma*) in direct relationship with that of the cross.

[3] There are several variants of the *swastika*, notably one form with curved arms (looking like two intersecting S's), and other forms betraying a relationship with various symbols whose meaning we cannot go into here. The most important of these forms is the one called the *clavigerous* or "keyed" *swastika* because its arms are formed of keys; we propose to deal more particularly with this in another study (see *La Grande Triade*, ch. VI). Again, certain figures which have retained only a purely decorative character, such as the one known as the "Greek key pattern", were originally derived from the *swastika*.

[4] See *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. I.

[5] *Ibid.*, ch. II. Having there indicated the fantastic interpretations of modern westerners, we will not return to them here.

traced in the equatorial plane, and then the central point, as already explained, will be the projection of the axis on this plane which is perpendicular to it. As for the direction of rotation indicated by the figure, its importance is only secondary and does not affect the general meaning of the symbol; in fact both forms are found, indicating both clockwise and anti-clockwise rotation,[1] and this need not mean that it is always intended to establish an opposition of some kind between them. It is true that in certain countries and epochs schisms from the orthodox tradition may have occurred, and the schismatics, in order to manifest their antagonism, may have deliberately given the figure an orientation contrary to the one used in the environment from which they separated; but this in no way touches the essential meaning, which remains the same in all cases. Besides, the two forms are often found in association, and they can then be regarded as representing one and the same rotation looked at from each of the two poles. This is connected with the very complex symbolism of the two hemispheres, which we cannot go into here.[2]

We cannot think of developing all the considerations to which the symbolism of the *swastika* can give rise, and which in any case are not directly connected with the subject of this study. But its considerable importance from the traditional viewpoint made it impossible to omit all mention of this special form of the cross.

[1] In Sanskrit, the word *swastika* is the only one used to denote the symbol in question, in all cases. The term *sauvastika*, which some people have sought to apply to one of the two forms in order to distinguish it from the other (which would then alone be the true *swastika*) is really only an adjective derived from *swastika* and indicating that which relates to that symbol or to its meanings. As for the word *swastika* itself, it is derived from *su asti*, a form of benediction, which has its exact equivalent in the Hebrew *ki-tob* of *Genesis*. Regarding the latter, the fact that it is found repeated at the end of the account of each of the "days" of the Creation is remarkable enough if one bears this parallel in mind: it seems to indicate that these "days" are assimilable to so many rotations of the *swastika*, or, in other words, complete revolutions of the "world wheel", which engender the succession of "evening and morning" that the text then mentions.

[2] In this respect there is a relation between the symbol of the *swastika* and that of the double spiral, likewise most important, and also closely akin to the Far-Eastern *yin-yang* with which we shall be dealing later on.

CHAPTER XI

Geometrical Representation of the Degrees of Existence

In the preceding chapters, we have been concerned with examining the various aspects of the symbolism of the cross and showing their attachment to the metaphysical signification indicated at the outset. These considerations however are little more than preliminaries, and what must now be developed is the metaphysical signification itself. This involves going as deeply as possible into the geometrical symbolism which applies equally both to the degrees of universal Existence and to the states of each being, that is to say both from the "macrocosmic" and the "microcosmic" standpoint.

It should first of all be recalled that when the being is considered in its individual human state, the corporeal individuality is actually only a restricted portion, a mere mode, of this human individuality. The integral human individuality is capable of an indefinite development, with modalities of manifestation which are equally indefinite in number, but their sum total still only constitutes one particular state of the being, wholly situated at one and the same degree of universal Existence. In the case of the individual human state, the corporeal modality belongs to the domain of gross or sensible manifestation, and the other modalities to that of subtle manifestation.[1] Each modality is determined by a set of conditions which demarcate its possibilities, and each of which, considered apart from the others, may again extend beyond the domain of that modality, and may then combine with different conditions to constitute the domains

[1] *Man and his becoming*, ch. II, and also ch. XII and XIII. It should also be noted that when speaking of subtle manifestation, one is often forced to include in this term the individual non-human states, besides the extra-corporeal modalities of the human state which is here in question.

of other modalities forming part of the same integral individuality.[1] Thus, what determines a certain modality is not exactly a special condition of existence, but rather a combination or association of several conditions; to make this point more completely clear, it would be necessary to take an example such as that of the conditions of corporeal existence, a detailed exposition of which would require, as was said before, a whole study to itself.[2]

Further, when considered from a general standpoint, each of the domains just mentioned contains similar modalities appertaining to an indefinitude of other individuals, each of whom in turn is a state of manifestation of one of the beings in the Universe: here we have states and modalities that correspond to one another in all beings. The sum total of the domains—indefinite in extent—that contain all the modalities of one and the same individuality constitutes one degree of universal Existence, which in its integrality contains an indefinitude of individuals. Naturally this assumes a degree of Existence corresponding to an individual state, since the human state has been taken as a basis; but all that relates to the manifold modalities holds good equally for any one state, whether individual or non-individual, since the individual condition can introduce restrictive limitations only, though the possibilities it includes do not thereby lose their indefiniteness.[3]

By virtue of what has been said, a degree of Existence can be represented by a horizontal plane of indefinite extent in two dimensions, which correspond to the two indefinitudes that are to be considered: on the one hand, that of the individuals, which may be represented by the sum of the straight lines in the plane that are parallel to one of the dimensions, which, if desired, may be defined by the intersection of this horizontal plane with a frontal

[1] There are also modalities which are really extensions resulting from the suppression of one or more limiting conditions.

[2] On these conditions, see *Man and his becoming*, ch. XXIV.

[3] As has already been stated, an individual state is one that includes form among its determining conditions, so that "individual manifestation" and "formal manifestation" are equivalent expressions.

plane[1]; and on the other hand that of the domains peculiar to the individuals' different modalities, which will then be represented by the sum of the straight lines in the horizontal plane that are perpendicular to the foregoing direction, that is, the ones parallel to the visual or fore-and-aft axis, the direction of which defines the other dimension.[2] Each of these two classes includes an indefinitude of parallel straight lines, all indefinite in length; each point in the plane will be determined by the inter-section of two straight lines, one from each class, and hence will represent a particular modality of one of the individuals comprised in the degree considered.

Each of the degrees of universal Existence (which embraces an indefinitude of them) may be similarly represented, in a three-dimensional space, by a horizontal plane. It has just been shown that a section of such a plane by a frontal plane represents an individual,—or rather, speaking in a more general way and one capable of being applied without distinction to all degrees, represents a certain state of a being, a state which may be individual or non-individual, according to the conditions of the degree of Existence it belongs to. Thus a frontal plane may now be regarded as representing a being in its totality. This being comprises an indefinite multiplicity of states, which are then depicted by all the horizontal lines in that plane; on the other hand, the vertical lines in the plane are formed by the groups of modalities that respectively correspond to one another in all these states. Furthermore, in three-dimensional space there is an indefinitude of such planes, representing the indefinitude of the beings contained in the entire Universe.

[1] If these terms borrowed from perspective are to be rightly understood, it must be recalled that a frontal plane is a particular case of a vertical plane, whereas a horizontal plane, on the contrary, is a particular case of an end-view plane. Conversely, a vertical straight line is a particular case of a plane projection, and a vertical projection is a particular case of a horizontal straight line. It must also be observed that through every point, there passes one single vertical line and an indefinite multitude of horizontal lines, but only one horizontal plane (containing all the horizontal lines that pass through that point) and an indefinite multitude of vertical planes (all passing through the vertical straight line, which is their common intersection, and each being determined by that vertical line and one of the horizontal lines passing through the point in question).

[2] In the horizontal plane, the direction of the first dimension is that of the plane projections (or transversal straight lines), and the direction of the second is that of the vertical projections.

CHAPTER XII

Geometrical Representation of the States of the Being

In the three-dimensional representation just given, each modality of any state of the being is indicated by a point alone; however, such a modality is itself also capable of developing in the course of a cycle of manifestation involving an indefinitude of secondary modifications. Thus, in the corporeal modality of the human individuality, for example, these modifications will be all the moments of its existence (naturally regarded under the aspect of temporal succession, which is one of the conditions to which this modality is subjected), or, which amounts to the same thing, all the acts and motions whatsoever that it will perform in the course of this existence.[1] If all these modifications are to be included in our representation, then the modality considered will have to be depicted, not merely by a point, but by a whole straight line, each point in which will now be one of the secondary modifications in question; and here it should be carefully noted that this straight line, although indefinite, is none the less limited; in fact, everything indefinite is limited, and so is (if the expression is permissible) every power of the indefinite.[2] Simple indefinitude being represented by a straight line,

[1] We purposely here use the word "motions", because it alludes to a metaphysical theory which is most important but does not fall within the scope of the present study. A summary notion of this theory can be obtained by referring to what we have said elsewhere on the subject of the idea of *apurvâ* in the Hindu doctrine and of "concordant actions and reactions" (*Introd. to Study of Hindu Doctrines*, pp. 273–275).

[2] The indefinite, which proceeds from the finite, is always reducible thereto, since it is only the development of the possibilities included or implied in the finite. It is an elementary truth, though one too often overlooked, that the alleged "mathematical infinite" (a quantitative indefinitude either numerical or geometrical) is not infinite at all, for it is limited by the determination inherent in its own nature. (See also *Les principes du Calcul infinitésimal, passim* but especially ch. I, II, VII and VIII.—*Translator*).

double indefinitude or the indefinite to the power of two will be represented by a plane, and triple indefinitude or the indefinite to the power of three by a three-dimensional expanse. If therefore each modality, envisaged as a simple indefinitude, is depicted by a straight line, a state of the being, involving an indefinitude of such modalities, in other words a double indefinitude, will be depicted in its entirety by a horizontal plane, and a being in its totality, with the indefinitude of its states, will be represented by a three-dimensional expanse. This new representation is thus more complete than the former one, but it is clear that unless three-dimensional space is departed from, we can here consider only a single being, and not, as previously, the whole of the beings in the Universe, for the consideration of the totality of beings would make it necessary to introduce a further indefinitude, which would be of the fourth order, and could not be geometrically depicted except by imagining a fourth dimension superadded to space.[1]

In this new representation, we see first of all that through each point in the expanse under consideration there pass three straight lines, respectively parallel to the three dimensions of this expanse; each point can therefore be taken as the apex of a trihedral right-angle, constituting a system of co-ordinates to which the whole expanse may be referred, and the three axes of which will form the three-dimensional cross. If the vertical axis of this system be taken as given, it will meet each horizontal plane in a point, which will be the origin of the rectangular co-ordinates to which that plane will be referred, and the two axes of which will form a two-dimensional cross. It can be said that this point is the centre of the plane, and the vertical axis is the locus of the centres of all the horizontal planes; every vertical, in other words every line parallel to this axis, also contains points which correspond to one another in those planes. If in addition to the vertical axis a particular

[1] This is not the place to deal with the question of the "fourth dimension" of space, which has given rise to many erroneous or fantastic notions, and which would find a more natural place in a study of the conditions of corporeal existence. (See *Le Règne de la Quantité*, ch. XVIII, where these errors are examined.—*Translator*).

horizontal plane is taken as the basis of the system of co-ordinates, then the trihedral right-angle just mentioned will also be wholly determined thereby. There will be a two-dimensional cross, traced by two of the three axes, in each of the three planes of co-ordinates, one of which is the horizontal plane in question, while the others are the two orthogonal planes each passing through the vertical axis and through one of the horizontal axes; and these three crosses will have as their common centre the apex of the trihedral angle, which is the centre of the three-dimensional cross and may thus be also regarded as the centre of the whole expanse. Every point could be the centre, and, one may say, potentially is so; but in fact it is necessary for one particular point to be given in order to be actually able to draw the cross, in other words to measure the whole expanse, or, analogically, to realize the total scope of the being's possibilities.

CHAPTER XIII

Relationship between the two foregoing Representations

In the second three-dimensional representation, in which only one being in its totality was considered, both the horizontal direction in which the modalities of all the states of this being develop, and also the vertical planes that are parallel to it, imply an idea of logical succession, whereas the vertical planes that are perpendicular to it correspond, correlatively, to the idea of logical simultaneity.[1] If we project the whole expanse on to the plane of co-ordinates which corresponds to the idea of simultaneity, then each modality of each state of the being will be projected on a point of a horizontal straight line, this line itself being the projection of the entirety of a certain state of the being, and, in particular, the state whose centre coincides with that of the total being will be depicted by the horizontal axis lying in the plane on to which the projection is made. We are thus brought back to our first representation, namely that in which the being is situated wholly in a vertical plane; a horizontal plane can then once again represent a degree of universal Existence, and the establishment of this correspondence between the two representations, by allowing us to pass readily from the one to the other, will enable us to avoid departing from three-dimensional space.

Each horizontal plane, when it represents a degree of universal Existence, comprehends the whole development of a particular possibility, the manifestation of which, as a whole, constitutes what may be called a "macrocosm", that is, a

[1] Naturally the ideas of succession and simultaneity must here be conceived from the purely logical viewpoint only, and not the chronological, because time is merely a special condition, not indeed of the human state as a whole, but of certain modalities of it.

world, whereas in the other representation, which relates to a single being alone, the plane is only the development of the same possibility in that being, constituting one of the being's states, whether individual or non-individual, which may be called by analogy a microcosm. Further, it is most important to observe that when considered in isolation the " macrocosm " itself, like the " microcosm ", is only one of the elements of the Universe, just as each particular possibility is only one element of total Possibility.

Of the two representations, the one that relates to the Universe may, for simplicity of language, be called the " macrocosmic " representation, and the one that relates to a being, the " microcosmic ". We have seen how the three-dimensional cross is traced in the latter ; the same will hold good in the " macrocosmic " representation if the corresponding elements in it are determined, namely a vertical axis, which will be the axis of the Universe, and a horizontal plane, which by analogy may be termed its equator ; and it must also be pointed out that each " macrocosm " has here its centre on the vertical axis, as did each " microcosm " in the other representation.

The above shows the analogy that exists between the " macrocosm " and the " microcosm ", every part of the Universe being analogous to the other parts, and its own parts also being analogous to it, because all are analogous to the total Universe. It follows that if we consider the " macrocosm ", each of the definite domains that it comprises is analogous to it ; similarly, if we consider the " microcosm ", each of its modalities is also analogous to it. Thus, to take a particular instance, the corporeal modality of the human individuality can be taken as symbolizing, in its various parts, that same individuality envisaged as a whole.[1] It must be remembered however that the individuality embraces an indefinite multitude of co-existing modalities, just as the bodily organism itself is composed of an indefinite multitude of cells, each of which also has an existence of its own.

[1] See *Man and his becoming*, ch. XII.

CHAPTER XIV

The Symbolism of Weaving

There is a symbolism which is directly related to what has gone before, although it is sometimes applied in a way that may at first sight seem a little remote from our subject. In eastern doctrines, traditional books are frequently referred to by terms which in their literal sense are connected with weaving. Thus, in Sanskrit, *sûtra* properly means "thread"[1]: a book may be formed by a collection of *sûtras*, as a fabric is formed by a tissue of threads; *tantra* also has the meaning of "thread" and that of "fabric", and denotes more particularly the "warp" of a fabric.[2] Similarly in Chinese *king* is the "warp" of a material, and *wei* is its "weft"; the first of these two words denotes at the same time a fundamental book, and the second denotes the commentaries on it.[3] This distinction between the "warp" and the "weft", in the corpus of traditional scriptures, corresponds to the distinction drawn in Hindu terminology between *Shruti*, which is the fruit of direct inspiration, and *Smriti*, which is the product of reflection upon the contents of *Shruti*.[4]

[1] This word is identical with the Latin *sutura*, the same root, with the meaning of "to sew", being found in both languages. It is at least curious to note that the Arabic word *sûrat*, which denotes chapters of the *Qoran*, is composed of exactly the same elements as the Sanskrit *sûtra*; this word has in addition the kindred sense of "row" or "line", and its derivation is unknown.

[2] The root *tan* of this word expresses in the first place the idea of extension.

[3] The use of knotted cords, which took the place of writing in China at a very distant period, is also attached to the weaving symbolism; these cords were of the same kind as those used by the ancient Peruvians and called by them *quipos*. Though it has sometimes been maintained that these were merely for counting, it seems clear that they also expressed far more complex ideas, especially since we are told that they formed the "annals of the empire", and since the Peruvians never had any other mode of writing, whereas they possessed a highly perfected and refined language. This kind of ideography was made possible by multiple combinations in which the use of threads of different colours played an important part.

[4] See *Man and his becoming*, ch. I, and also *Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel*, ch. VIII.

If the meaning of this symbolism is to be clearly grasped, it should first be observed that the warp, formed as it is by threads stretched upon the loom, represents the immutable, principial elements, whereas the threads of the weft, which pass between those of the warp by the to-and-fro movement of the shuttle, represent the variable and contingent elements, in other words the applications of the principle to this or that set of particular conditions. Again, if one thread of the warp and one of the weft are considered, it will at once be perceived that their meeting forms the cross, of which they are respectively the vertical line and the horizontal; and every stitch in the fabric, being thus the meeting-point of two mutually perpendicular threads, is thereby the centre of such a cross. Now, following what was said about the general symbolism of the cross, the vertical line represents that which joins together all the degrees of Existence by connecting their corresponding points to one another, whereas the horizontal line represents the development of one of these states or degrees. Thus the horizontal direction may be taken as depicting, for example, the human state, and the vertical direction that which is transcendent in relation to that state. This transcendence clearly belongs to *Shruti*, which is essentially "non-human", whereas *Smriti* involves applications to the human order and is produced by the exercise of the specifically human faculties.

At this point another observation may be made which will bring out still more clearly the concordance of different symbolisms which are more closely connected than might be supposed; this concerns the aspect of the cross in which it symbolizes the union of complements. In this aspect, as we have seen, the vertical line represents the active or masculine principle (*Purusha*), and the horizontal one the passive or feminine principle (*Prakriti*), all manifestation being produced by the "actionless" influence of the first upon the second. Now, in another context, *Shruti* is likened to direct light, depicted by the Sun, and *Smriti* to reflected[1] light, depicted by the moon; but, at the same time, the sun and moon,

[1] The double meaning of the word "reflection" is worthy of note.

in nearly all traditions, also respectively symbolize the masculine and feminine principles in universal manifestation.

The weaving symbolism is not applied merely to traditional scriptures; it is also used to represent the world, or more precisely the aggregate of all the worlds, that is, the indefinite multitude of the states or degrees that constitute universal Existence. Thus, in the *Upanishads*, the supreme *Brahma* is called "That upon which the worlds are woven, as warp and weft", or by other similar formulæ[1]; here again, warp and weft naturally have the respective meanings just defined. Again, according to the Taoist doctrine, all beings are subject to the continual alternation of the two states of life and death (condensation and dissipation, vicissitudes of *yang* and *yin*)[2]; and the commentators call this alternation "the to-and-fro motion of the shuttle upon the cosmic loom".[3]

Actually, these two applications of one and the same symbolism are even more closely akin, since in certain traditions the Universe itself is sometimes symbolized by a book; in this connection, one need only recall the *Liber Mundi* of the Rose-Croix, and also the well-known Apocalyptic symbol of the *Liber Vitæ*.[4] From this standpoint again, the threads

[1] *Mundaka Upanishad*, 2nd Mundaka, 2nd Khanda, shruti 5; *Brihad-Âranyaka Upanishad*, 3rd Adhyaya, 8th Brahmana, shrutis 7 and 8. The Buddhist monk Kumarajîva translated into Chinese a Sanskrit work entitled *The Net of Brahma* (*Fan-wang-king*), according to which the worlds are arranged like the meshes of a net.

[2] *Tao-te-King*, XVI.

[3] Chang-Hung Yang also compares this alternation to breathing, the active inspiration corresponding to life and the passive expiration to death, the end of the one being moreover the beginning of the other. The same commentator also makes use of the lunar rotation as a term of comparison, the full moon signifying life and the new moon death, with two intermediate periods of waxing and waning. As regards breathing, what is said here refers to the two phases of existence of a being as if he himself were the breather; in the universal order, on the other hand, out-breathing corresponds to the development of manifestation, and inbreathing to the return to the unmanifest, as was said earlier; according as things are considered in respect of manifesta on or in respect of the Principle, one must not forget to apply the "inverse sense" in analogy.

[4] As was stated earlier, in certain representations the book sealed with seven seals, with the lamb lying upon it, is placed, like the Tree of Life, at the common source of the four rivers of Paradise. We also remarked upon the relationship between the symbolism of the tree and that of the book: the leaves of the tree and the characters in the book alike represent all the beings in the Universe (the "ten thousand beings" of the Far-Eastern tradition).

of the warp by which the corresponding points in all states are connected, form the Sacred Book which is the prototype (or rather, archetype) of all traditional scriptures, and of which these Scriptures are merely expressions in human language.[1] The threads of the weft, each of which is the development of events in a certain state, form the commentary, in the sense that they give the applications relating to the different states; all events, envisaged in the simultaneity of the "timeless", are thus inscribed in the Book, of which each represents as it were one character, being also identified with one stitch in the fabric. On this symbolism of the book, the following passage from Mohyiddin ibn Arabi may also be quoted: "The Universe is a vast book; the characters of this book are all written, in principle, with the same ink and transcribed on to the eternal Table by the Divine Pen; all are transcribed simultaneously and inseparably; for that reason the essential phenomena hidden in the 'Secret of Secrets' were given the name of 'transcendant letters'. And these same transcendent letters, that is to say all creatures, after having being virtually condensed in the Divine Omniscience, were carried down on the Divine Breath to the lower lines, and composed and formed the manifested Universe."[2]

Another form of the symbolism of weaving, also found in the Hindu tradition, is the image of the spider weaving its web; this image is even more exact, since the spider spins the thread out of its own substance.[3] By reason of the web's circular shape, which may be considered as the plane section of the cosmogonic spheroid, that is, of the non-closed sphere alluded to earlier on, the warp is here represented by the threads radiating from the centre, and the weft by the threads arranged in concentric circles.[4] To return from

[1] This is expressly affirmed of the *Veda* and the *Qoran*; the idea of the "Eternal Gospel" also shows that this same conception is not wholly foreign to Christianity.

[2] *El-Futûhâtul-Mekkiyah*. One might compare the part likewise played by letters in the cosmogonic doctrine of the *Sepher Ietsirah*.

[3] Commentary of Shankarâchârya on the *Brahma-Sûtras*, 2nd Adhyâya, 1st Pâda, sûtra 25.

[4] The spider, at the centre of its web, corresponds to the sun surrounded by its rays; it can thus be taken as a figure of the "Heart of the World".

this to the ordinary representation of weaving, it is only necessary to consider the centre as being indefinitely remote, so that the radii become parallel in the vertical direction, while the concentric circles become straight lines perpendicular to these radii, that is, horizontal lines.

To sum up, the warp may be said to represent the principles that bind together all the worlds or all the states, each of its threads forming the connection between corresponding points in these different states; and the weft, the chains of events that are produced in each of the worlds, each thread being thus, the development of events in a given world. From a different viewpoint, it may also be said that the manifestation of a being in a certain state of existence, like any other event, is determined by the meeting of a thread of the warp with a thread of the weft. Each thread of the warp is then a being envisaged in his essential nature, which in so far as it is a direct projection of the principial "Self" provides the connecting-link between all his states, and maintains his unity through their indefinite multiplicity. In this case, the thread of the weft which this thread of the warp meets at a given point corresponds to a definite state of existence, and the intersection of the two threads determines the relation of the being, as regards his manifestation in that state, with the cosmic environment in which he is thus situated. The individual nature of a human being, for instance, is the resultant of the meeting of these two threads; in other words, it will always be necessary to distinguish in him two kinds of elements which will have to be referred to the vertical and the horizontal directions respectively: the first are the elements that properly belong to the being in question, whereas the second proceed from the environmental conditions.

By a different but equivalent symbolism, the threads of which the "world fabric" is formed are also termed the "hair of *Shiva*"[1]; they might be metaphorically described as the "lines of force" of the manifested Universe, and the directions of space represent them in the corporeal order. It will readily be seen in how many different ways all these

[1] See above, on the subject of the directions of space.

considerations are capable of being applied; but the sole purpose of this chapter was to indicate the essential meaning of the symbolism of weaving, which apparently is very little known in the West.[1]

[1] Nevertheless, traces of a symbolism of the same kind are to be found in Graeco-Roman antiquity, notably in the myth of the Fates; but this really seems to relate rather to the threads of the weft alone, and its "fateful" character may in fact be explained by the absence of the notion of the warp, i.e. by the fact that the being is envisaged solely in his individual state, without any conscious intervention (for that being) of his transcendent personal principle. This interpretation is further justified by the way in which Plato regards the vertical axis in the myth of Er the Armenian (*Republic*, Book X): according to him, in fact, the luminous axis of the world is the "spindle of Necessity"; it is an axis of diamond, surrounded by a number of concentric sheaths, of different dimensions and colours, which correspond to the different planetary spheres; the Fate Clotho makes it turn with her right hand, hence from right to left, which is also the most usual and normal direction of rotation of the *swastika*. *A propos* of this "diamond axis", the Tibetan symbol of the *vajra*, a name which means both "thunderbolt" and "diamond", is also related to the World Axis.

CHAPTER XV

Representation of the Continuity of the different Modalities of One and the same State of the Being

If we consider one of the being's states, depicted by a horizontal plane in the "microcosmic" representation that we have described, it remains to say more precisely what the centre of this plane and also the vertical axis that passes through this centre correspond to. But, to reach that point, it will be necessary to introduce a further geometrical representation, which will show not only, as hitherto, the parallelism or correspondence, but also the continuity which exists between the modalities of each state as well as between the different states themselves.

For this purpose, the figure will have to undergo a change, which corresponds to what in analytical geometry is termed a passage from a system of rectilinear co-ordinates to a system of polar co-ordinates. Instead of representing different modalities of one and the same state by parallel straight lines, as previously, we can represent them by concentric circumferences described in the same horizontal plane, and having their common centre at the centre of the plane itself, that is to say, at its meeting-point with the vertical axis.

In this way, it becomes clear that each modality is finite and limited, because it is depicted by a circumference, which is a closed curve, or at least a line whose ends are known and as it were given.[1] On the other hand this circumference contains an indefinite multitude of

[1] The reservation is necessary in order that this may not seem to contradict what is to follow.

points,[1] representing the indefinitude of secondary modifications that are comprised in the modality considered, whatever it may be.[2] Further, the concentric circumferences must leave no interval between one another, apart from the infinitesimal distance between two immediately adjacent points (we shall return to this question a little later), so that the totality of these circumferences will comprise all the points in the plane, which implies that there is continuity between them. However, to achieve a real continuity, the end of each circumference must coincide with the beginning of the following one (and not that of the same circumference); and for this to be possible without the two successive circumferences' being confounded, it is necessary that these circumferences, or rather the curves that we have been regarding as such, shall be in actual fact non-closed curves.

Indeed, we can go further in this direction: it is physically impossible in fact to describe a line that is truly a closed curve. To prove this, it is enough to observe that in the space in which our corporeal modality is situated, everything is ceaselessly in motion (owing to the effect of the spatial and temporal conditions, of which motion is as it were a

[1] It is important to notice that we do not say an indefinite number, but indefinite multitude, because it is possible that the indefinitude in question may exceed all number, even though the series of numbers is itself indefinite, but in discontinuous mode, whereas that of the points in a line is so in continuous mode. The term "multitude" is broader and more comprehensive that that of "numerical multiplicity", and can even apply outside the domain of quantity, of which number is only a special mode; this was clearly realized by the scholastic philosophers, who transposed this notion of "multitude" into the order of "transcendentals", i.e. universal modes of Being, where it stands in the same analogical relation to that of numerical multiplicity as the conception of metaphysical Unity stands to that of arithmetical or quantitative unity. It is, of course, this "transcendental" multiplicity that is in question when we speak of the multiple states of the being, for quantity is only a particular condition applicable to certain of those states.

[2] As the length of a circumference increases the farther the circumference is from the centre, one might at first suppose that it contains more points; yet if we reflect that every point in a circumference is the end of one of its radii, it follows that there are no more points in the greater circumference than in the lesser. Besides, if there are always as many points (if it is possible to employ such a mode of speech under these conditions) in a circumference that diminishes as it approaches its centre, then as this circumference is in the limiting case reduced to the centre itself, the centre, though being only a single point, must contain all the points in the circumference; which amounts to saying that all things are contained in unity.

resultant); so that, if we want to describe a circumference, and start at a given point in space, we shall necessarily find ourselves at a different point when we have completed it, and shall never again pass through the starting-point. Similarly, the curve that symbolizes the course of any evolutive[1] cycle will never have to pass twice through one and the same point, which is tantamount to saying that there cannot be a closed curve (nor a curve containing "multiple points"). This representation shows that there cannot be two identical possibilities in the Universe, which indeed would amount to a limitation of total Possibility—an impossible limitation, because, since it would have to contain Possibility, it could not be contained therein. Thus any limitation of universal Possibility is in the strict and proper sense of the word an impossibility; and for this reason all philosophical systems, which, *quā* systems, explicitly or implicitly postulate such limitations, stand equally condemned from a metaphysical standpoint.[2] To return to identical or supposedly identical possibilities, it should also be pointed out, for greater exactitude, that two possibilities that were truly identical would not differ in respect of any of their conditions of realization; but if all the conditions are the same, then it is also the same possibility and not two distinct ones, since there is then coincidence in all respects.[3] This reasoning can be strictly applied to all the points in our representation, each of these points depicting a particular modification which realizes a certain given possibility.[4]

[1] By "evolutive cycle", we merely mean—following the original sense of the word—the process of development of the possibilities contained in any one mode of existence, without its being implied that this process can have the slightest relation to any "evolutionist" theory (cf. *Man and his becoming according to the Vedânta*, ch. XVII); we have so often expressed our views about such theories that the point need not be laboured here.

[2] It will be seen, moreover, that this excludes all the more or less "reincarnationist" theories that have sprung up in the modern West, on the same grounds as Nietzsche's famous "everlasting return" and other similar conceptions; these considerations are set forth in detail in *L'Erreur spirite*, Part 2, ch. VI.

[3] This is a point which Leibnitz seems to have seen well enough when enunciating his "principle of indiscernibles", though he has perhaps not framed it so clearly (cf. *Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel*, ch. VII).

[4] The term "possibility" is here taken in its most restricted and specialized sense: what is in question is not even one particular possibility capable of an indefinite development, but only any one of the elements that such a development involves.

The beginning and the end of any one of the circumferences we have to consider, then, are not the same point, but two consecutive points on one and the same radius, and in reality they cannot even be said to belong to the same circumference : one still belongs to the preceding one, of which it is the end, and the other to the following one, of which it is the beginning. The extreme terms of an indefinite series can be regarded as situated outside that series, by the very fact that they establish its continuity with other series ; and all this can be applied, in particular, to the birth and death of the corporeal modality of the human individuality. Thus, the two extreme modifications of each modality do not coincide, but there is simply correspondence between them in the state of the being of which those modalities form part, this correspondence being indicated by the situation of the points representing them on one and the same radius from the centre of the plane. Consequently, the same radius will contain the extreme modifications of all the modalities of the state in question, but the modalities should not be regarded, properly speaking, as successive (for they can just as well be simultaneous), but only as logically linked together. The curves that depict these modalities, instead of being circumferences as we had originally supposed, are the successive turns of an indefinite spiral described in the horizontal plane and developing outwards from its centre. This curve continuously broadens out, the radius varying by an infinitesimal quantity, namely the distance between two consecutive points on the radius. The distance may be deemed as small as one likes, in accordance with the actual definition of infinitesimal quantities, namely quantities capable of diminishing indefinitely ; but it can never be regarded as nil, for the two consecutive points are not confounded ; were it able to become nil, then there would no longer be anything but one and the same point.

CHAPTER XVI

Relationship between the Point and Space

The question raised by the final observation in the last chapter calls for further examination, but we do not propose to go fully into the question of space in all its implications, since this would more properly fall to be dealt with in a study of the conditions of corporeal existence. The first thing to be said is that the distance between two immediately adjacent points, which we have been led to consider as a result of the introduction of continuity into the geometrical representation of the being, may be regarded as the limit of space in the sense of indefinitely decreasing quantities; in other words, it is the smallest space possible, after which there remains no spatial condition at all, and it would not be possible to suppress it without departing from the realm of existence that is subject to that condition. Therefore, when space is divided indefinitely,[1] and when this division is carried as far as is possible, that is, to the limits of the spatial possibility by which divisibility is conditioned (and which is indefinite in the decreasing as well as the increasing sense), what is arrived at as the final result is not a point, but rather the elementary distance between two points. It follows from this that for spatial extension to exist there must be already two points, and the (one-dimensional) expanse which is realized by their simultaneous presence, and which is precisely the distance between them constitutes a third element which expresses the relationship between the two points, by at once joining and separating

[1] We say "indefinitely", but not "to infinity", which would be an absurdity, divisibility being necessarily an attribute proper to a limited domain, because the spatial condition, on which it depends, is itself essentially limited; hence there must be a limit to divisibility, as there is to any relativity or determination whatsoever; and we can be certain that this limit exists, even though it is not at present accessible to us.

them. This distance, moreover, when regarded as a relation, is plainly not composed of parts, for if it were, the parts into which it could be resolved would simply be other relationships of distance of which it is logically independent, just as from the numerical point of view unity is independent of fractions.[1] This is true for any distance, when envisaged solely in respect of the two points that are its extremities, and is *a fortiori* true for an infinitesimal distance, which is in no way a definite quantity, but solely expresses a spatial relation between two immediately adjacent points, such as two consecutive points in any line. Again, the points themselves, considered as extremities of a distance, are not parts of the spatial continuum, although the distance-relation assumes that they are conceived as situated in space; it is thus really distance that is the true spatial element.

Accordingly, it is not possible in all strictness to say that a line is formed of points, and the reason for this is not difficult to understand, for, since each of the points is without extension, their mere addition, even if they are in indefinite multitude, can never form an extension; in reality, the line is constituted by the elementary distances between its consecutive points. In the same way, and for a similar reason, if we consider an indefinitude of parallel straight lines in a plane, we cannot say that the plane is constituted by the combination of all these lines, or that they are true constitutive elements of the plane; the true elements are the distances between those lines, distances which make them distinct lines and not confounded, and if the lines do form the plane in a certain sense, it is not by themselves but by their distances that they do so, as in the case of the points of a line. Again, a three-dimensional expanse is not composed of an indefinitude of parallel planes, but of the distances between all those planes.

[1] Properly speaking, fractions cannot be "parts of unity", for true unity is obviously without parts; this faulty definition of fractions implies a confusion between numerical unity, which is essentially indivisible, and "units of measurement", which are unities in only a quite relative and conventional manner, and which, being of the nature of continuous magnitudes, are necessarily divisible and composed of parts. (For all the foregoing reasoning, see also *Les principes du calcul infinitésimal*, especially ch. VIII.—*Translator*).

However, the primordial element, that which exists by itself, is the point, since it is presupposed by distance and distance is only a relationship; hence space itself presupposes the point. The latter may be said to contain in itself a virtuality of extension, which it can only develop by first duplicating itself, placing itself so to speak opposite to itself, and then by multiplying (or better, sub-multiplying) itself indefinitely, so that manifested space in its entirety proceeds from differentiation of the point, or, to speak more exactly, from the point in so far as it differentiates itself. This differentiation however is real only from the viewpoint of spatial manifestation; it is illusory in respect of the principial point itself, which does not thereby cease to be in itself that which it was, and whose essential unity can in no way be affected thereby.[1] The point, considered in itself, is in no wise subject to the spatial condition, for on the contrary it is the principle of that condition: it is the point that realizes space and produces extension by its act, which, in the temporal condition (but only therein), is translated by movement; but, in order to realize space thus, it is bound, by some one of its modalities, to situate itself in space, which indeed is nothing without it, and which it will completely fill by the deployment of its own virtualities.[2] Successively in the temporal condition, or simultaneously outside that condition (which, be it observed in passing, would take us outside ordinary three-dimensional space),[3] it identifies itself, with all the potential points in space in order to realize the latter. Thus space must be regarded as no more than a mere potentiality

[1] If spatial manifestation disappears, all the points situated in space are reabsorbed into the single principial point, since there is no longer any distance between them.

[2] Leibnitz has rightly distinguished between what he calls "metaphysical points", which for him are the true "units of substance", and which are independent of space, and "mathematical points", which are only simple modalities of the former, inasmuch as they are their spatial determinations, constituting their respective "points of view" in order to represent or express the Universe. For Leibnitz also, it is what is situated in space that makes the whole reality of space itself; but it is evident that one cannot, as he does, relate to space everything that constitutes, in each being, the expression of the entire Universe.

[3] The transmutation of succession into simultaneity, in the integration of the human state, implies a sort of "spatialization" of time, which may be translated by the addition of a fourth dimension.

of being, which is nothing else than the total virtuality of the point conceived in its passive aspect, the locus or container of all the manifestations of its activity, a container which has no existence except through the realization of its possible content.[1]

Being without dimensions, the primordial point is also without form; hence it does not belong to the order of individual existences. It does not individualize itself in any way except when it situates itself in space, and then not in itself, but solely by one of its modalities, so that strictly speaking it is these latter that are really individualized, and not the principial point. Besides, if there is to be form, there must already be differentiation, hence multiplicity realized in a certain measure, which is possible only when the point opposes itself, if the expression is permissible, by means of two or more of its modalities of spatial manifestation; and it is this opposition, fundamentally, that constitutes distance. The realization of distance is the first accomplishment of space, which without it, as was said, is but a mere potentiality of receptiveness. We would also observe that distance at first exists only virtually in the spherical form that was mentioned earlier, which is the form that corresponds to the minimum of differentiation, being "isotropic" in respect of the central point, with nothing to distinguish one particular direction from any other; the radius, which is here the expression of distance (taken from the centre to the periphery), is not actually drawn and does not form a component part of the spherical figure. The actual realization of distance is made explicit only in the straight line, of which it is the initial and fundamental element, as the result of the specifying of a certain given direction. Thereafter, space can no longer be regarded as "isotropic"; from this standpoint it must be referred to two symmetrical poles (the two points between which there is distance) instead of being referred to a single centre.

[1] It will be seen that the relation of the principial point to virtual (or rather potential) extension is analogous to that of "essence" to "substance", these two terms being taken in their universal sense, i.e. as denoting the two poles of manifestation, active and passive, which the Hindu doctrine calls *Purusha* and *Prakriti* (see *Man and his becoming*, ch. IV).

The point, which realizes the whole of space, as has just been shown, makes itself the centre of space by measuring it along all its dimensions through the indefinite extension of the branches of the cross in the six directions, or towards the six cardinal points of space. It is thus " Universal Man ", of whom this cross is the symbol (and not individual man, who, as such can realize nothing outside his own state of being), that is truly the " measure of all things ", to use the expression of Protagoras which we have quoted elsewhere,[1] though it is unlikely that the Greek sophist was himself aware of this metaphysical interpretation.[2]

[1] *Man and his becoming*, ch. XVI.

[2] Had it been our present intention to undertake a more complete study of the spatial condition and its limitations, we might have shown how a proof of the absurdity of atomistic theories can be deduced from the considerations set forth in this chapter. Without dwelling further on the point, it may be observed that everything corporeal is necessarily divisible, by the very fact of being extended, that is, subject to the spatial condition. (Cf. *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines*, pp. 254–255).

CHAPTER XVII

Ontology of the Burning Bush

The significance of the doubling of the point by polarization will be even clearer if we look at it from a strictly ontological point of view; but first of all let us consider it from a logical or even merely grammatical standpoint. Here, in fact, there are three elements, namely the two points and the distance between them, and it will be seen that these three elements correspond exactly to those of a proposition: the two points represent its two terms, while their distance from each other, expressing the relation between them, plays the part of the "copula", that is, the element that connects the two terms. If the proposition is considered in its commonest and most general form, namely the attributive proposition, in which the "copula" is the verb "to be",[1] it will be seen that it expresses an identity, at least in a certain respect, between the subject and the attribute; the reason is that the two points are really only the duplication of one and the same point, which has so to speak taken up a position confronting itself, as has been explained.

The relation between the two terms can also be conceived as a relation of knowledge. In this case, the being, confronting himself as it were in order to know himself, duplicates himself into subject and object; but here again the two are one in reality. This may be extended to all true knowledge, essentially implying as it does an identification of subject and object, which can be expressed by saying that in the relation and the measure in which there is knowledge, the knower is the known. It is now clear that this point of view

[1] All the other forms of propositions considered by logicians can always be reduced to the attributive form, because the relationship expressed by the latter has a more essential and fundamental character than any other.

is directly connected with the former one, for it can be said that the known object is an attribute (that is, a modality) of the knower-subject.

If we now consider Universal Being, which is represented by the principial point in its indivisible unity, and of which all beings in so far as they are manifested in Existence are really no more than "participations", it can be said to polarize into subject and attribute without having its unity affected thereby. The proposition of which it is at once subject and attribute then takes the form: "Being is Being". This is the actual enunciation of what logicians call the "principle of identity"; but, in this form, its real scope clearly transcends the domain of logic, and is properly and primarily an ontological proposition, whatever applications in different orders may be extracted from it. It may also be said to express the relation of Being as subject (That which is) to Being as attribute (That which It is), and further, since Being-subject is the Knower and Being-attribute (or object) is the Known, this relation is Knowledge itself; but, at the same time, it is a relation of identity; absolute Knowledge is therefore actual identity, and all true knowledge, being a participation therein, also implies identity in so far as it is effective. It should be added that as the relation draws its reality solely from the two terms it connects, and as these two are in fact only one, it follows that all three elements (Knower, Known and Knowledge) are truly one only[1]; this can be expressed by saying that "Being knows Itself by Itself".[2]

[1] See what is said about the ternary *Sachchidânanda* in *Man and his becoming*, ch. XIV.

[2] In Islamic esotericism, formulæ such as the following are also found: "*Allâh* has created the world from Himself by Himself in Himself", or again, "He has sent His message from Himself to Himself by Himself". These two formulæ, moreover, are equivalent, for the Divine Message is the "Book of the World", the archetype of all sacred Books, and the "transcendent letters" which compose that Book are all creatures, as was explained earlier. It follows from this that the "science of letters" (*ilmul-hurûf*), taken in its highest meaning, is the knowledge of all things in the Principle itself, as eternal essences; in what might be called its middle sense, it is cosmogony; lastly, in its lowest sense, it is the knowledge of the powers of names and numbers, in so far as they express the nature of each being, a knowledge which, by reason of this correspondence, permits action of a "magical" order to be exerted, by their means, upon the beings themselves.

The traditional value of the formula that has just been expressed appears clearly from the fact that it is found in the Hebrew Bible, in the account of God's manifestation to Moses in the Burning Bush.[1] When Moses asks what is His Name, He replies: *Eheieh asher Eheieh*,[2] which is usually translated "I am Who am" (or "I am That I am"), but the most exact rendering of which is "Being is Being".[3] In fact, Being having been postulated, what can be said of It (and, one must add, what cannot but be said of It) is first that It is, and then that It is Being; these necessary affirmations essentially constitute the whole of ontology in the proper sense of the word.[4] The second way of envisaging the same formula is to postulate first of all the first *Eheieh*, then the second one as the reflection of the first in a mirror (image of the contemplation of Being by Itself); and in the third place the "copula" *asher* sets itself between those two terms as a link expressing their reciprocal relationship. This exactly corresponds to what has been stated above: the point, at first unique, then duplicating itself by a polarization which is also a reflection, and finally the relation of distance (an essentially reciprocal one) establishing itself between the two points by the very fact of their confrontation.[5]

[1] *Exodus*, iii, 14.

[2] In certain schools of Islamic esotericism, the "Burning Bush", a support of the Divine Manifestation, is taken as a symbol of the individual appearance persisting after the being has attained to the "Supreme Identity", in the case parallel to that of the *jivanmukta* in the Hindu doctrine (see *Man and his becoming*, ch. XXIII); it is the heart resplendent with the light of the *Shekinah*, by the effectively realized presence of the "Supreme Self" at the centre of the human individuality.

[3] Here, in fact, *Eheieh* must be regarded as a noun, not a verb, and this appears in the context that follows, wherein Moses is enjoined to tell the people: "*Eheieh* hath sent me to you". As for the relative pronoun *asher* "who", when it plays the part of the "copula", as here, it has the sense of the verb "to be", for which it does duty in the proposition.

[4] The famous "ontological argument" of St. Anselm and Descartes, which has given rise to so many discussions, and in fact is highly debatable in the "dialectical" form in which it has been put forward, becomes perfectly useless, just as any other reasoning does, if, instead of speaking of the "existence of God" (which indeed implies a mistake as to the meaning of the word "existence"), one simply puts forward the formula "Being is", which is self-evident, depending on intellectual intuition and not on the discursive reason (see *Introduction to the Hindu Doctrines*, pp. 128–9).

[5] It need hardly be pointed out that as the Hebrew *Eheieh* is pure Being, the sense of this name is exactly identical with that of *Ishwara* in the Hindu doctrine, which similarly contains in Itself the ternary *Sachchidananda*.

CHAPTER XVIII

Passage from Rectilinear Coordinates to Polar Coordinates: Continuity by Rotation

It is now necessary to return to the last of the geometrical representations that have been mentioned. The introduction of this is tantamount to substituting polar coordinates for the rectilinear and rectangular coordinates of the previous " microcosmic " representation. Every variation in the radius of the spiral (the latter starting from the centre tangentially to the tion on the axis that traverses all the modalities, that is, the axis perpendicular to the direction in which the development of each modality takes place. As for the variations on the axis parallel to this last direction, these are replaced by the different positions occupied by the radius in revolving about the pole (the centre of the plane or origin of the coordinates), in other words by the variations in its angle of rotation, measured from a given position taken as origin. This initial position, which will be the normal one at the outset of the spiral (the latter starting from the centre tangentially to the radius perpendicular to that position) will be that of the radius which, as already said, contains all the extreme modifications (beginning and end) of all the modalities.

But, of all such modalities, not only do the beginning and the end correspond to each other, but each intermediate modification or element of a modality has likewise its corresponding element in every other, the corresponding modifications being always represented by points lying on one and the same radius issuing from the pole. If this radius, whichever it may be, is taken as normal at the origin of the spiral, we shall always get the same spiral, but the figure as a whole will have turned through a certain angle. In order to represent the

perfect continuity between all the modalities and the correspondence of all their elements, the figure would have to be imagined as simultaneously occupying all possible positions around the pole, with all these figures interpenetrating one another, since each of them, in the sum total of its indefinite development, equally comprises all the points in the plane. Properly speaking, it is only one and the same figure in an indefinitude of different positions, which correspond to the indefinitude of values the angle of rotation can assume, supposing this angle to vary continuously until the radius, starting from the given initial position, returns after a complete revolution to superimpose itself upon that first position.

On that supposition, we should get the exact image of a vibratory movement propagating itself indefinitely, in concentric waves, around its starting-point, in a horizontal plane such as the free surface of a liquid[1]; and that would be the most exact possible geometrical symbol of the integrality of a state of being. Were it desired to go further into considerations of a purely mathematical order—which are not to the point here except in so far as they furnish symbolical representations—it could even be shown that the realization of that integrality would correspond to the integration of the differential equation expressing the relationship between the concomitant variations of the radius and of its angle of rotation, both varying together, and one as a function of the other, continuously, that is, by infinitesimal quantities. The arbitrary constant that figures in the integral would be determined by the position of the radius taken as origin, and this same quantity, which is fixed for a given position of the figure, would be bound to vary continuously from 0 to 2π for all its positions; accordingly, if we regard the positions as able to be simultaneous (this amounts to suppressing the temporal condition, which endows the activity of manifestation with the particular qualification constituting movement), the constant must be left indeterminate between those two extreme values.

[1] What is here in question is what in physics is called the "theoretical" free surface, for in practice the free surface of a liquid is not indefinitely extended and never perfectly realizes the horizontal plane.

However, it should be carefully noted that these geometrical representations are always to some extent imperfect, as indeed must be the case with any representation or formal expression. In practice, we are naturally obliged to situate them in a particular space, in a given extension, and space, even when envisaged in the whole extension it is capable of, is no more than a special condition which is contained in one of the degrees of universal Existence, and to which (added to or combined with other conditions of the same order) certain of the multiple domains comprised in that degree of Existence are subjected—each of such domains constituting, in the " macrocosm ", the analogue of what in the " microcosm " is the corresponding state of the being, situated at that same degree. The representation is necessarily imperfect, simply by being enclosed within narrower limits than that which it represents, and indeed it would otherwise be useless[1]. On the other hand, while always remaining included within the bounds of the at present conceivable, or even the far more restricted bounds of the imaginable (which proceeds wholly from the sensible), the representation will be proportionately less imperfect the less limited it becomes, which really amounts to saying, the higher the power of the indefinite it introduces[2]. In spatial representations, in particular, this is expressed by adding an extra dimension, as has been shown above; however, this question will be further clarified later.

[1] Hence the higher can never in any way symbolize the lower, but on the contrary is always symbolized by it. Obviously if the symbol is to fulfil its purpose as a " support ", it must be more accessible, and therefore less complex or extended than what it expresses or represents.

[2] In infinitesimal quantities, there is always something that corresponds exactly, but in an inverse sense, to these increasing powers of the indefinite, namely, the decreasing orders of the infinitesimal quantities. In both cases, a quantity of a certain order is indefinite, in the increasing or the decreasing sense, not only in respect of ordinary fixed quantities, but also in respect of quantities belonging to all the preceding orders of indefinitude. Thus there is no radical heterogeneity between ordinary quantities (considered as variables) and indefinitely increasing or indefinitely decreasing quantities.

CHAPTER XIX

Representation of the Continuity between the Different States of the Being

In this new representation, all that has been considered so far is one horizontal plane, that is, one single state of the being. It is now necessary to depict also the continuity between all the horizontal planes, which represent the indefinite multiplicity of all the states. This continuity is geometrically obtainable in a similar manner: instead of supposing the horizontal plane as fixed in three-dimensional space (a supposition which the fact of movement makes as incapable of material realization as is the tracing of a closed curve), we need only suppose that it changes its position imperceptibly, moving parallel to itself, that is, always remaining perpendicular to the vertical axis, in such a way as to meet this axis at all its points in succession, the passage from one point to another corresponding to the completion of one of the spiral turns that we have considered. The spiral movement will here be deemed isochronous, both in order to simplify the representation as much as possible, and also in order to express the equivalence of the multiple modalities of the being in each of its states, when regarded from the viewpoint of the Universal.

For further simplicity, we may provisionally consider each of the turns as a circumference, as we did in the case of the fixed horizontal plane. Here again, the circumference will not be closed, for when the radius that describes it comes round again and superimposes itself on its original position, it will no longer be in the same horizontal plane (deemed fixed, as being parallel to the direction of one of the planes of coordinates and marking a certain definite situation on the axis perpendicular to that direction); the elementary distance

that separates the two extremities of this circumference, or rather of the curve supposed to be a circumference, will then be measured, not now on a radius issuing from the pole, but on a line parallel to the vertical axis[1]. These extreme points do not belong to the same horizontal plane, but to two superimposed horizontal planes; they are situated on either side of the horizontal plane considered in the course of its intermediary travel between these two positions (which corresponds to the development of the state represented by that plane), because they mark the continuity of each state of the being with the ones preceding it and immediately following it in the hierarchical scheme of the total being. If we consider the radii which contain the extremities of the modalities of all the states, their superimposition forms a vertical plane of which they are the horizontal straight lines, and this vertical plane is the locus of all the above-mentioned extreme points, which might be called the limiting-points for the different states, as they previously were, from a different standpoint, for the various modalities of each state. The curve that we provisionally regarded as a circumference is actually one turn, of infinitesimal altitude (the distance between two horizontal planes cut by the vertical axis at two consecutive points), of a helix described on a revolving cylinder whose axis is the vertical axis of our representation. Correspondence between the points on successive turns is here marked by their situation on one and the same generatrix of the cylinder, that is, on one and the same vertical line; the points that correspond to one another, throughout the multiplicity of the states of the being, seem to merge when we consider the totality of the three-dimensional space and view them in orthogonal projection on a base plane of the cylinder, that is, on a given horizontal plane.

To complete this representation it is now enough to envisage, simultaneously, on the one hand this helicoidal movement taking place on a vertical cylindrical system formed by an indefinite multitude of concentric circular cylinders (the radius varying by only an infinitesimal amount from one to

[1] Expressed in different terms, it is in the vertical sense that the curve remains open, not in the horizontal sense as previously.

another), and on the other hand the spiral movement we considered earlier in each supposedly fixed horizontal plane. As a result of the combination of these two movements, the base plane of the system will be the horizontal spiral, equivalent to the aggregate of an indefinite multitude of non-closed concentric circumferences ; but beyond that, in order to carry still further the analogy between the two- and three-dimensional extensions respectively, and also the better to symbolize the perfect mutual continuity of all the states of the being, we shall have to envisage the spiral, not in one position only, but in all positions it can occupy around its centre. We shall thus get an indefinite multitude of vertical systems such as the foregoing, having the same axis, and all interpenetrating one another when regarded as coexisting, because each of them equally comprises the totality of the points in one and the same three-dimensional space, in which they are all situated ; here again, this is only the same system considered simultaneously in all the indefinite multitude of positions that it can occupy while accomplishing a complete rotation about the vertical axis.

However, the analogy thus established is still not altogether sufficient ; but before proceeding further, it should be pointed out that all that has been said is equally applicable to the " macrocosmic " representation. In that case, the successive turns of the indefinite spiral traced in a horizontal plane, instead of representing the various modalities of one state of a being, would represent the multiple realms of a degree of universal Existence, while the vertical correspondence would be that of each degree of Existence, in each of the given possibilities it comprises, with all the other degrees. It should be added, to avoid mentioning the point again, that this concordance between the " macrocosmic " and the " microcosmic " representations will remain valid for the representations that follow.

CHAPTER XX

The Universal Spherical Vortex

To return to the complex vertical system considered in the last chapter, it will be seen that the three-dimensional space which is filled by this system is not "isotropic" about the point that is taken as its centre: in other words, owing to the fixing of one particular and so to speak "privileged" direction which is the axis of the system, namely the vertical, the figure is not homogeneous in all directions from that centre. On the other hand, in the horizontal plane, when we were simultaneously considering all positions of the spiral about the centre, this plane was envisaged homogeneously and under an "isotropic" aspect in respect of its centre. For this to hold good in three-dimensional space, it must be noted that every straight line passing through the centre could be taken as the axis of a system such as the one we have been considering, so that any direction can play the part of the vertical direction; similarly since any plane that passes through the centre is perpendicular to one of these straight lines, it follows that, correlatively, any direction can play the part of the horizontal direction, or indeed of the direction parallel to any one of the three planes of coordinates. In fact, any plane that passes through the centre can become one of these three planes in an indefinite multitude of systems of tri-rectangular coordinates, for it contains an indefinitude of pairs of orthogonal straight lines intersecting at the centre (these lines being all the radii issuing from the pole in the depiction of the spiral); and each of these pairs can form any two of the three axes of one of these systems. Just as every point in the space is a potential centre, as was said earlier, so any straight line in that space is a potential axis, and, even when the centre has already been fixed, each straight line that

passes through it is still potentially any one of the three axes. When the central or principal axis of a system has been chosen, it still remains to fix the other two axes in the plane perpendicular to the first and likewise passing through the centre; but it is necessary for not only the centre itself but also the three axes to be determined before the cross can be actually traced, that is, before the entire space can be really measured in its three dimensions.

All systems such as our vertical representation can be regarded as coexisting and as having respectively as central axes all the straight lines that pass through the centre, for in fact they do coexist in the potential state, and besides, this is no bar to afterwards choosing three particular axes of coordinates to which the whole space will be referred. Here again, all the systems in question are really only different positions of one and the same system as its axis assumes every possible position about the centre, and the systems interpenetrate for the same reason as before, namely that each of them comprises all the points in the space. One might say that it is the principial point previously mentioned (independent of any determination, and representing the being in itself), which effectuates or realizes this space, hitherto potential only and conceived as a mere possibility of development, by filling its total volume, indefinite to the third power, by the complete expansion of its virtualities in all directions. Moreover, it is in the plenitude of expansion that perfect homogeneity is obtained, just as, conversely, extreme distinction is realizable only in extreme universality[1]; at the central point of the being, as was said earlier, perfect equilibrium is established between the opposing terms of all contrasts and all antinomies to which outward and particular viewpoints give rise.

When all the systems are considered in this manner as coexisting, the directions of space all play the same part and the radiation from the centre outwards may be regarded as spherical, or rather spheroidal. The total volume, as has been shown, is a spheroid extending indefinitely in all directions,

[1] We here again allude to the union of the two viewpoints of "unity in plurality and plurality in unity".

with a surface that is never closed, any more than the curves previously described. Moreover, the plane spiral, when simultaneously envisaged in all its positions, is nothing but a section of that surface by a plane passing through the centre. It has been stated that the realization of a plane in its integrality was expressed by the calculation of a simple integral; here, as a volume and not a surface is in question, the realization of the space in its integrality would be expressed by the calculation of a double integral[1]; the two arbitrary constants that would enter into this calculation could be determined by choosing two axes of coordinates, the third axis being thereby fixed, since it must be perpendicular to the plane of the two others and must pass through the centre. It should further be observed that the deployment of this spheroid is ultimately nothing other than the indefinite propagation of a vibratory movement (or "undulatory", for these two terms are ultimately synonymous), no longer in a horizontal plane only, but in the whole three-dimensional space, of which the starting-point of this movement may now be regarded as the centre. If this space is regarded as a geometrical, that is, spatial symbol of total Possibility (a necessarily imperfect symbol, because limited by its very nature), then the representation at which we have finally arrived will be the depiction—in so far as such a thing is possible—of the universal spherical vortex by which the realization of all things is accomplished, and which the metaphysical tradition of the Far East calls *Tao*, that is, the "Way".

[1] A point which it is important to bear in mind, though it cannot be dwelt on at present, is that an integral cannot be calculated by taking each of its elements one by one in succession, for in that way, the calculation would never be completed. Integration can be achieved only by a single synthetic operation, and the analytical procedure of formation of arithmetical sums cannot be applied to the indefinite. (This subject has been fully dealt with by M. Guénon in *Les Principes du Calcul Infinitésimal*, chap. XXI, "The Indefinite is analytically inexhaustible", and chap. XXII, "Synthetic character of Integration".—*Translator*.)

CHAPTER XXI

Determination of Elements in the Representation of the Being

In the preceding chapter, the universalization of our geometrical symbol has been carried to the farthest limits conceivable (or rather, imaginable, since it is always a representation of the sensible order that is involved); and this has been done by gradually introducing into it, in a number of successive phases (or, to speak more exactly, phases successively envisaged in the course of this study), an increasirgly greater indetermination, answering to what we have called the increasingly higher powers of the indefinite, but always without departing from three-dimensional space. On arriving at this point, it will be necessary to retrace the same path, as it were, in order to determine positively all the elements in the figure, for without such determination, although the figure exists quite complete in the virtual state, it cannot be actually traced. But this determination, which at the outset was envisaged only hypothetically so to speak, and as a mere possibility, will now become real, for we shall be able to show the exact significance of each of the elements that constitute the cruciform symbol.

What will first be considered is not the universality of beings, but one single being in its totality; the vertical axis will be assumed to be given, and hence the plane passing through that axis and containing the extreme points of the modalities of each state. We shall thus get back to the vertical system whose base is the horizontal spiral considered in one single position; this system has already been described. Here, the directions of the three axes of coordinates are given, but only the vertical one is in fact determined in position; one of the two horizontal axes will lie in the vertical plane just

mentioned, and the other will naturally be perpendicular to it ; but the horizontal plane that contains these two straight lines still remains undetermined. If we were to determine this plane, we should also thereby determine the centre of the space, that is, the origin of the system of coordinates to which that space is referred, since that point is none other than the intersection of the horizontal plane of coordinates with the vertical axis. All elements in the figure would then in fact be determined, and this would allow the tracing of the three-dimensional cross which measures the extension in its totality.

It should again be recalled that, in order to constitute the system representing the total being, we have had to consider, first a horizontal spiral and then a vertical cylindrical helix. If we consider in isolation any one turn of such a helix, and if we neglect the elementary difference of level between its two ends, we may regard it as a circle described in a horizontal plane ; each turn of the horizontal spiral can similarly be taken as a circumference, if the elementary variation of the radius between its two ends is neglected. Consequently, every circumference described in a horizontal plane and having as its centre the actual centre of the plane, that is to say its intersection with the vertical axis, can conversely, and with the same approximations, be envisaged as a turn belonging at once to a vertical helix and to a horizontal spiral[1]; it follows that the curve we are representing as a circumference is strictly speaking neither closed nor plane.

Such a circumference will represent any one unspecified modality of an equally unspecified state of the being, envisaged along the vertical axis, which will project itself horizontally in a point, the centre of the circumference. If, however, it were to be envisaged along either of the two horizontal axes, it would project itself in a segment—symmetrical in respect of the vertical axis—of a horizontal straight line which, taken with the latter, forms a two-dimensional cross, this horizontal straight line being the tracing, on the

[1] This circumference is the same as that which externally bounds the figure known by the name of *yin-yang* in the Far-Eastern symbolism, a figure which will be specially dealt with a little later on.

vertical plane of projection, of the plane in which the circumference in question is situated.

As regards the significance of the circumference and the central point, the latter being the tracing of the vertical axis on a horizontal plane, it should be pointed out that according to a quite general symbolism, the centre and the circumference represent the starting-point and the termination of any one mode of manifestation.[3] They therefore respectively correspond to what, in the Universal Order, are " essence " and " substance " (*Purusha* and *Prakriti* in the Hindu doctrine), or again Being in itself and its possibility, and for any mode of manifestation they depict the more or less particular expression of these two principles regarded as complements, active and passive in their mutual relationship. This finally justifies what was said before about the relation between the different aspects of the symbolism of the cross, for it follows that in our geometrical representation the horizontal plane (which is deemed fixed *quā* plane of coordinates, though it may occupy any position, being determined in direction only) will play a passive part in respect of the vertical axis, which amounts to saying that the corresponding state of the being will be realized in its integral development under the active influence of the principle that is represented by the axis[2]; this will become more intelligible in what follows, but it was important to point it out here and now.

[1] It has been seen that in the symbolism of numbers this figure corresponds to the denary, envisaged as the complete development of unity.

[2] If we consider the two-dimensional cross obtained by projection upon a vertical plane, a cross naturally formed by one vertical and one horizontal line, we see that under these conditions the cross truly symbolizes the union of the active and passive principles.

CHAPTER XXII

The Far-Eastern Symbol of the Yin-Yang; Metaphysical Equivalence of Birth and Death

To return to the determination of our figure, there are ultimately only two things that call for particular consideration, namely the vertical axis on the one hand, and the horizontal plane of coordinates on the other. We know that a horizontal plane represents one state of the being, each modality of which corresponds to a spiral turn that we have merged into a circumference ; however, the ends of the turn do not actually lie in the plane of the curve, but in two immediately adjacent planes, for this curve, as conceived in the vertical cylindrical system, is an element of a helix, whose pitch is infinitesimal. " On that account, although we at present live, act, and reason about contingencies, we can and even must regard the graph of individual evolution[1] as a (plane) surface. Indeed, it possesses all the attributes and qualities of one, and only differs from a surface when regarded in the Absolute[2]. Thus, on our plane (or degree of existence), the ' vital circulus ' is an immediate truth, and the circle is indeed the representation of the human individual cycle "[3].

The *yin-yang*, which in the traditional Far-Eastern symbolism depicts the " circle of individual destiny ", is in actual fact a circle, for the above reasons. " It is a circle representative

[1] Either for one particular modality, or even for the integral individuality if it is considered in isolation in the being ; when only one state is considered, the representation must be plane. To forestall any misunderstanding, let it again be recalled that for us the word " evolution " can mean nothing more than the development of a given set of possibilities.

[2] i.e. when envisaging the being in its totality.

[3] Matgioi, *La Voie Métaphysique*, p. 128.

of an individual or specific[1] evolution, and only in two dimensions does it participate in the universal cyclic cylinder. Having no thickness, it has no opaqueness, and is represented as diaphanous and transparent, in other words the graphs of the evolutions prior and posterior to its moment[2] are seen and imprinted on the sight through it "[3]. But, of course, " it must never be forgotten that if, taken by itself, the *yin-yang* can be regarded as a circle, in the succession of individual modifications[4] it is an element of a helix : any individual modification is essentially a three-dimensional vortex[5] ; there is only one human stage, and the course once completed is never covered again."[6] The two ends of each turn of a helix of infinitesimal pitch, as was said before, are two immediately adjacent

[1] The species, in fact, is not a transcendent principle in respect of the individuals that compose it ; it does not surpass, but belongs to, the order of individual existences ; accordingly it is situated at the same level of universal Existence, and participation in the species may be said to take place in a horizontal direction. Perhaps it will one day be possible to devote a special study to this question of the conditions of the species.

[2] These evolutions are the development of the other states, divided thus in respect of the human state. Metaphysically, it should be recalled, there can never be any question of " priority " or posterity except in the sense of a causal and purely logical concatenation, which cannot exclude the simultaneousness of all things in the " eternal present ".

[3] Matgioi, *op. cit.* p. 129—The figure of the *yin-yang* is divided into two parts, one dark and one light, which respectively correspond to these prior and posterior evolutions, for in respect of the human state, the former states can be symbolically regarded as dark and the latter ones as bright; at the same time, the dark part is the side of the *yin* and the light part the side of the *yang*, in conformity with the original significance of these two terms. Again, since *yang* and *yin* are also the masculine and feminine principles, what we get from another point of view, as was indicated earlier, is a representation of the primordial " Androgyne " the two halves of which are already differentiated but not yet separated. Finally, as representing the cyclic revolutions, whose phases are linked to the alternate predominance of *yang* and *yin*, the same figure is again related to the symbol of the *swastika*, as also to that of the double spiral mentioned earlier. (See *La Grande Triade*, chaps. IV to VI.—*Translator.*)

[4] Considered in so far as they correspond to one another (in logical succession) in the different states of the being, which however must be viewed in simultaneity for the different spires of the helix to be mutually comparable.

[5] It is an element in the universal spherical vortex previously described ; there is always analogy and a sort of " proportionality " (without its being possible, however, for there to be any common measure) between the whole and each of its even infinitesimal elements.

[6] Matgioi, *op. cit.* pp. 131-132 (note).—This again formally excludes the possibility of " reincarnation ". In this respect, it might also be observed, from the viewpoint of the geometrical representation, that a straight line can meet a plane in one point only ; this applies, in particular, to the vertical axis in respect of each horizontal plane.

points on a generatrix of the cylinder, which is parallel to the vertical axis (and moreover situate in one of the planes of coordinates). These two points do not really belong to the individuality, or, more generally, to the state of being represented by the horizontal plane under consideration. " Entry into the *yin-yang* and emergence from the *yin-yang* are not within the individual's power to command, for they are two points which, while belonging to the *yin-yang*, belong also to the spiral inscribed on the lateral (vertical) surface of the cylinder, and which are subject to the attraction of the ' Will of Heaven '. And indeed, man is not free as to either his birth or his death. As regards his birth, he is free neither to accept nor to refuse nor to choose the moment. As regards his death, he is not free to escape it ; and neither can he be free, in all analogical justice, as regards the moment of his death. . . . In any case, he is not free from any of the conditions of the two acts ; birth irresistibly launches him upon the round of an existence that he has neither asked for nor chosen ; death withdraws him from that round and irresistibly launches him upon another, prescribed and foreknown by the ' Will of Heaven ', without his being able to modify it in any respect[1]. Thus, man on earth is a slave as regards his birth and death, that is, in respect of the two chief acts of his individual life, the only ones which finally summarize his special evolution in regard to the Infinite "[2]. It should be clearly appreciated that " the phenomena 'birth ' and ' death ', regarded in themselves and apart from the cycles which lie between them, are perfectly equal "[3] ; it can even be said that this is really only one and the same phenomenon envisaged on two opposite sides, from the standpoint of one and the other of the two consecutive cycles between which it is interposed. This indeed emerges at once

[1] This is so because the individual as such is only a contingent being and does not carry within him his own sufficient reason. That is why the course of his existence, if looked at without taking account of the variation in the vertical direction, appears as the " cycle of necessity ".

[2] Matgioi, *op. cit.* pp. 132-133.—" But, between birth and death, the individual is free, in the putting forth and the directing of all his earthly acts ; in the ' vital circulus ' of the species and the individual, the attraction of the ' Will of Heaven ' does not make itself felt."

[3] *Ibid.* pp. 138-139 (note).

in our geometrical representation, because the end of any one cycle always and necessarily coincides with the beginning of another, and because we use the words " birth " and " death ", in their altogether general acceptation, merely to denote the passage from cycle to cycle, and whatever may be the scope of such cycles, which may just as well be those of worlds as of individuals. These two phenomena " accordingly accompany and complete each other : human birth is the immediate result of a death (to another state) ; human death is the immediate cause of a birth (likewise into another state). Neither of these circumstances can ever occur without the other. And, as time does not exist here, it can be affirmed that, between the intrinsic value of the phenomenon birth and the intrinsic value of the phenomenon death, there is metaphysical identity. As for their relative value, and by reason of the immediacy of the results, death at the end of a given cycle is higher than birth into the same cycle, by the whole value of the attraction of the ' Will of Heaven ' upon that cycle, that is, mathematically, the pitch of the evolutive screw."[1]

[1] *Ibid.* p. 137.—On this question of the metaphysical equivalence of birth and death, see also *Man and his Becoming*, chapters VIII and XVII.

CHAPTER XXIII

Significance of the Vertical Axis: Influence of the Will of Heaven

It follows from what has gone before that the pitch of the helix—the element by which the extremities of any individual cycle elude the proper domain of the individuality—is the measure of the "attractive force of the Divinity"[1]. The influence of the "Will of Heaven" on the being's development is therefore measured parallel to the vertical axis; this clearly implies the simultaneous consideration of a plurality of states, forming so many integral cycles of existence (horizontal spirals) since this transcendent influence does not make itself felt within a single state taken in isolation.

The vertical axis thus represents the metaphysical locus of the manifestation of the "Will of Heaven", and passes through each horizontal plane at its centre, that is, at the point where the equilibrium which that manifestation implies is achieved; in other words, the point of complete harmonization of all the elements that go to make up that particular state of the being. This, as was shown earlier, is what must be understood by the "Invariable Middle" (*Ching-yung*), and can be considered as a reflection, in each state of the being (through the equilibrium which is a sort of image of the principial Unity in the manifested order), of the "Activity of Heaven", which in itself is non-acting and unmanifested, though it must be conceived as capable of action and manifestation (yet without being thereby affected or modified in any way whatever), and indeed as capable of all action and all manifestation, precisely because it is beyond all particular actions and particular manifestations. Consequently, it is possible to say that in the representation of a being, the vertical

[1] Matgioi, *La Voie Métaphysique*, p. 95.

axis is the symbol of the "personal way"[1] which leads to Perfection, and which is a specification of the "universal way" represented previously by an indefinite, non-closed spheroidal figure. This specification is obtained, as has been indicated, by the determination of one particular direction in space, namely that of the vertical axis.[2]

Mention has just been made of Perfection, and on this subject a short explanation is necessary. When the term is employed thus, it must be taken in its absolute and total sense. However, in order to be able to think about it in our present condition (as beings pertaining to the individual human state), this conception has to be rendered intelligible in distinctive mode. This intelligible conception is "active perfection" (*Ch'ien*), the possibility of the will in Perfection, and naturally of omnipotence, which is identical with what is termed the "Activity of Heaven". But, in order to be able to speak about it, the intelligible conception has further to be rendered sensible (because language, like every other outward expression, is necessarily of the sensible order); and it is then "passive perfection" (*Ch'uan*), the possibility of action as motive and goal. *Ch'ien* is the will capable of manifesting itself, and *Ch'uan* is the object of this manifestation; but, in addition, as soon as one says "active perfection" or "passive perfection", one no longer says Perfection in the absolute sense, since there is already a distinction and a determination, and accordingly a limitation. Again, if desired, *Ch'ien* can be called the acting faculty (it would be more correct to say "influencing"), corresponding to "Heaven" (*T'ien*), and *Ch'uan* the plastic faculty, corresponding to "Earth" (*Ti*); here, in Perfection, we find the analogues, though still more universal, of what have been distinguished, in Being, as "essence" and "substance"[3]. In any event, whatever the

[1] It should be borne in mind that metaphysically the "personality" is the transcendent and permanent principle of the being, whereas the "individuality" is only a transient and contingent manifestation of it.

[2] This throws further light on the relationship between the "Way" (*Tao*) and "Uprightness" (*Te*).

[3] See also *Man and his becoming*, ch. IV.—In the *kua* of Fu-hsi, *Chien* is represented by three full strokes and *Ch'uan* by three broken ones; it has already been shown that the full stroke is the symbol of *yang* or the active principle, and the broken stroke that of *yin* or the passive principle.

principle by which *Ch'ien* and *Ch'uan* are determined, it must be realized that metaphysically they exist only from our viewpoint as manifested beings, just as Being is not polarized and specified into " essence " and " substance " in itself, but only in relation to us, and in so far as we envisage it from the standpoint of universal manifestation, of which it is the principle and to which we belong.

Returning to the geometrical representation, we see that the vertical axis is determined as the expression of the " Will of Heaven " in the being's development, and this fact at the same time determines both the direction of the horizontal planes, representing the different states, and these states' horizontal and vertical correspondence, thus establishing their hierarchical arrangement. As a result of this correspondence, the limiting points of these states are determined as extremities of particular modalities ; the vertical plane which contains them is one of the planes of co-ordinates, as is the one perpendicular to it along the axis ; in each horizontal plane these two vertical planes trace a two-dimensional cross, whose centre is at the " Invariable Middle ". Thus there remains only one undetermined element, namely the position of the particular horizontal plane that will be the third plane of co-ordinates ; to this plane there corresponds, in the total being, a certain state, the determination of which will make it possible to trace the symbolic three-dimensional cross, in other words to achieve the actual totalization of the being.

One further point, which it is important to note before going further, is that the vertical distance between the extremities of any evolutive cycle is constant. From this it would seem that whatever the cycle envisaged, the " attractive force of the Divinity " always acts with the same intensity. This is in fact so in regard to the Infinite, and is expressed by the law of universal harmony, which demands the quasi-mathematical proportion of all variations. It is true, however, that to all appearance it might no longer be the same if one adopted a specialized viewpoint, and had regard only to the course of one given cycle which it was desired to compare with the others in the respect in question. In that case, it would be necessary

to find out the value of the pitch of the helix for the exact case in which one had placed oneself (admitting that it would be possible to place oneself there in fact, which is in any event outside the viewpoint of pure metaphysic); but "we do not know the essential value of this geometrical element, because we are at present unaware of the cyclic states through which we have passed, and we cannot therefore measure the metaphysical altitude that to-day separates us from the one we have emerged from"[1]. We have thus no direct means of appraising the measure of action of the 'Will of Heaven'; "We should know it only by analogy (by virtue of the law of harmony), if in our present state, being aware of our preceding one, we were able to assess the metaphysical quantity acquired[2], and hence to measure the upward force. The thing is not said to be impossible, for it is readily comprehensible; but it is not within the faculties of the present humanity"[3]. We would also observe in passing, and simply in order to point out (as we do whenever the opportunity arises) the concordance between all traditions, that what has just been said about the significance of the vertical axis provides a metaphysical interpretation of the well-known Gospel saying to the effect that the Word (or "Will of Heaven" in action) is (in respect of us) "the Way, the Truth and the Life"[4]. If we go back for a moment to the original "microcosmic" representation and consider its three axes of coordinates, then the "Way" (specified in regard to the being

[1] Matgioi, *op. cit.* pp. 137–138 (note).

[2] Naturally the term "quantity", here justified by the use of the mathematical symbolism, must be taken in only a quite analogical sense; the same is true of the word "force" and all others which conjure up images borrowed from the sensible world.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 96.—In this last quotation we have introduced some modifications, but without altering the meaning, so as to apply to each being what was said of the Universe as a whole. "Man has no power over his own life, because the law that governs life and death, his own mutations, escapes him; what then can he know of the law which governs the great cosmic mutations, the development of the universe?" (*Ch'uang-tzu*, ch. XXV).—In the Hindu tradition, the *Purânas* state that there is no measure between prior and posterior *Kalpas*, i.e. cycles relating to other degrees of universal Existence.

[4] To forestall any possible misunderstanding it is as well to specify that what is here in question is exclusively a metaphysical interpretation, and in no wise a religious one; between the two viewpoints there is all the difference that exists in Islam between the *haqiqah* (metaphysical and esoteric) and the *shariyah* (social and exoteric).

envisaged) will be represented, as here, by the vertical axis; of the two horizontal axes, one will then represent the "Truth" and the other the "Life". Whereas the "Way" is related to "Universal Man", with whom the "Self" is identified, the "Truth" is there related to intellectual man, and the "Life" to corporeal man (though this last term is also capable of a certain transposition)[1]; of the last two, which both belong to one and the same particular state, in other words to one and the same degree of universal Existence, the former must here be assimilated to the integral individuality, of which the latter is only a modality. The "Life" will then be represented by the axis parallel to the direction in which each modality develops, and the "Truth" by the axis which connects all the modalities together by running through them at right angles to that direction (this axis, though likewise horizontal, may be regarded as relatively vertical in respect of the other, in accordance with what was said earlier.) This, moreover, supposes that the tracing of the three-dimensional cross is related to the earthly human individuality, for it is only in relation to this that we have been considering the "Life" and even the "Truth"; this tracing depicts the action of the Word in the realization of the total being and its identification with "Universal Man".

[1] These three aspects of man (of which only the last two are "human", properly speaking) are denoted in the Hebrew tradition by the terms *Adam*, *Aish* and *Enôsh* respectively.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Celestial Ray and its Plane of Reflection

If we consider the super-imposed horizontal planes representing all the states of the being, it can also be said that, whether considered separately or all together, the vertical axis, which connects them all to one another and to the centre of the total being, symbolizes what various traditions call the "Celestial Ray" or "Divine Ray". This is the principle which the Hindu doctrine denotes by the names of *Buddhi* and *Mahat*[1], "which forms the higher, non-incarnate element in man, and which serves to guide him through the phases of universal evolution"[2]. The universal cycle, represented by our figure as a whole, and "of which humanity (in the individual, specific sense) constitutes only a phase, has a proper movement of its own[3], independent of our humanity, of all humanities, of all the planes (representing all the degrees of Existence), of which it forms the indefinite sum (which is "Universal Man")[4]. This proper movement which it derives from the essential affinity of the "Celestial Ray" towards its origin, orients it invincibly towards its End (Perfection) which is identical with its Beginning, with an upward and divinely beneficent (that is, harmonic) guiding force"[5], which is the same thing as that "force of attraction of the Divinity" referred to in the last chapter.

[1] See *Man and his becoming according to the Vedânta*, ch. VII, and also ch. XX, for the symbolism of the "solar ray" (*sushumna*).

[2] Simon and Théophanes, *Les Enseignements secrets de la Gnose*, p. 10.

[3] The word "movement" again is here a purely analogical expression only, since the universal cycle, in its totality, is obviously independent of the temporal and spatial conditions, as of all other particular conditions whatsoever.

[4] This "indefinite sum" is properly speaking an integral.

[5] *Ibid.* p. 50.

What must be insisted on is that the " movement " of the universal cycle is necessarily independent of any individual will whatever, particular or collective, which can operate only within its own particular sphere, and without ever departing from the given conditions of existence to which that sphere is subjected. " Man, *quā* man (individual), cannot dispose of anything more or better than his hominal destiny, whose individual course he is in fact free to check. But this contingent being, endowed with contingent virtues and possibilities, cannot move, check, or influence himself outside the special contingent plane on which, for the moment, he is placed and exercises his faculties. It is absurd to suppose that he could modify, much less check the eternal course of the universal cycle "[1]. Further, the indefinite extension of the possibilities of the individual, envisaged in his integrality, alters nothing of this, because it naturally cannot release him from the whole set of limiting conditions that characterize the state of being to which he belongs *quā* individual[2].

The " Celestial Ray " passes through all the states of the being and, as has already been said, marks the central point of each of them by its trace on the corresponding horizontal plane, and the locus of all these central points is the " Invariable Middle " ; but this action of the " Celestial Ray " is effective only if by its reflection on one of those planes it produces a vibration which, by propagating and spreading throughout the whole being, illuminates its cosmic or human chaos. We say cosmic or human, for this can apply to the " macrocosm " as well as to the " microcosm " ; in all cases, the aggregate of the being's possibilities properly constitutes only a chaos " without form and void "[3], wherein there is nothing but obscurity until the moment of this illumination which determines its harmonious organization in the passage from potency

[1] *Ibid*, p. 50.

[2] This is notably true of " immortality " in the western sense, i.e. conceived as a prolongation of the individual human state in " perpetuity " or Temporal indefinitude (see *Man and his becoming according to the Vedânta*, ch. XVIII).

[3] This is the literal translation of the Hebrew *thohu va-bohu*, which Fabre d'Olivet (*La Langue hébraïque restituée*) explains by " contingent potency of being in a potency of being ".

to act[1]. This same illumination strictly corresponds to the conversion of the three *gunas* one into another, which was described earlier by reference to a text of the *Vēda* : if the two phases of this conversion are considered, the result of the first, effected as from the lower states of the being, is brought about on the actual plane of reflection, whereas the second phase imparts to the reflected vibration an upward direction, which transmits it throughout the whole hierarchy of the higher states of the being. The plane of reflection, whose centre, the point of impact of the " Celestial Ray ", is the starting-point of this indefinite vibration, will then be the central plane in the assemblage of the states of the being, in other words the horizontal plane of coordinates in our geometrical representation, and its centre will in fact be the centre of the total being. In relation to the " Celestial Ray " which is the vertical branch of the three-dimensional cross, this central plane, on which its two horizontal branches are traced, plays a part analogous to that of " passive perfection " in relation to " active perfection ", or that of " substance " in relation to " essence ", of *Prakriti* in relation to *Purusha*. It is also, symbolically, " Earth " in relation to " Heaven ", and is identified with what all cosmogonic traditions represent as the " surface of the Waters "[2]. It can also be described as the plane of separation between the " lower waters " and the " upper waters "[3], that is, the double chaos, formal and formless, individual and extra-individual, of all states, both unmanifested and manifested, the whole array of which constitutes the total Possibility of " Universal Man ".

By the operation of the " Universal Spirit " (*Atmâ*), projecting the " Celestial Ray " which is reflected on the mirror of the " Waters ", there is enclosed within them a divine spark, an uncreated spiritual germ, which, in the potential Universe (*Brahmânda* or " World Egg "), is the determination of the " Non-Supreme " *Brahma* (*Apara-Brahma*) that the Hindu

[1] Cf. *Genesis* i, 2–3.
[2] See *Man and his becoming according to the Vedânta*, Ch. V.
[3] Cf. *Genesis*, i. 6–7.

tradition terms *Hiranyagarbha* (that is, the "Golden Embryo")[1]. In each being envisaged in particular, this spark of the intelligible Light constitutes, if one may so put it, a fragmentary unity (an expression which is indeed inaccurate if taken literally, for unity is really indivisible and without parts). This "fragmentary unity", developing in order to identify itself in act with the total Unity, to which it is identical in potency (for it contains in itself the indivisible essence of light, just as the nature of fire is wholly contained in each spark)[2], will radiate in all directions from the centre, and will realize in its expansion the perfect unfolding of all the being's possibilities. This principle, of divine essence and indwelling in beings (in appearance only, for it cannot really be affected by contingencies, and this state of "envelopment" exists only from the viewpoint of manifestation) is again, in the Vedic symbolism, *Agni*[3] manifesting itself at the centre of the *swastika*, which as we have seen is the cross traced on the horizontal plane, and which, by its rotation about that centre, generates the evolutive cycle that constitutes each of the elements in the universal cycle. The centre, the only point that remains motionless in this rotary movement, is by very reason of its immobility (an image of the principial immutability) the mover of the "wheel of existence"; it contains within it the "Law" (in the sense of the Sanskrit term *Dharma*)[4], that is, the expression or manifestation of the "Will of Heaven" for the cycle corresponding to the horizontal plane in which the rotation takes place, and, following what was said before, its influence is measured—or rather, would be measured if we

[1] See *Man and his becoming according to the Vedânta*, ch. XIII.

[2] See *Ibid.* ch. V.

[3] *Agni* is depicted as an igneous principle (as indeed is the luminous Ray that gives birth to it), fire being regarded as the active element in relation to water, the passive one.—*Agni* at the centre of the *swastika* is also the lamb (*agnus*) at the source of the four rivers in the Christian symbolism (see *Man and his becoming according to the Vedânta*, ch. III; *L'Ésotérisme de Dante*, ch. IV; *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. IX.

[4] See *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines*, Part 3, chap. V., and *Man and his becoming*, chap. IV.—For the relationship between the word *Dharma* and the Sanskrit name for the Pole, *Dhruva*, derived respectively from the roots *dhri* and *dhru*, which have the same meaning and essentially express the idea of stability, see *Le Roi du Monde*, chap. II.

had the faculty of doing so—by the pitch of the evolutive helix on the vertical axis[1].

The realization of the being's possibilities is thus effected by an activity which is always inward, since it is exerted from the centre of each plane; besides, metaphysically, there can be no outward action exerted upon the total being, for such action is not possible except from a relative and specialized viewpoint such as that of the individual[2]. This realization is depicted in different symbolisms by the opening of a flower on the surface of the "Waters". In the eastern traditions this flower is most commonly the lotus and in the western ones the rose or lily[3]: but we have no intention of giving a detailed account of these symbols, which may vary and be modified to a certain extent, by reason of the manifold adaptations to which they lend themselves, but which always and everywhere ultimately proceed from the same principle, taking into account certain secondary considerations, which are especially based on

[1] "When we now (in the course of manifestation) say 'The Principle', this term no longer denotes the solitary Being such as it was primordially; it denotes the Being that exists in all beings, the universal norm that presides over the cosmic evolution. The nature of the Principle, the nature of the Being, are incomprehensible and ineffable. Only the limited can be understood (in individual human mode) and be expressed. Of the Principle that acts as the pole, as the axis of the universality of beings, we only say that it is the pole, that it is the axis of universal evolution, without trying to explain it." (*Ch'uang-tzu*, ch. XXV). That is why the *Tao* "with a name", which is "the Mother of the ten thousand beings" (*Tao-te-King*, ch. I) is the "Great Unity" (*Tai-i*), symbolically located, as was said earlier, in the pole star: "If it is necessary to give a name to the *Tao* (although it cannot be named), then it will be called (as an approximate equivalent) the 'Great Unity' . . . The ten thousand beings are produced by *Tai-i*, modified by *yin* and *yang*."—In the West, in ancient "Operative Masonry", a plumb line, the image of the vertical axis, hangs from a point which symbolizes the celestial pole. This is also the suspension-point of the "balance" of which various traditions speak (see *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. X): and this shows that the "nothing" (*Ain*) of the Hebrew *Qabbalah* corresponds to the "non-acting" (*Wu-wei*) of the Far-Eastern tradition.

[2] We shall return later to the distinction between the "inner" and the "outer", which is again symbolical, as is all localization; but it should be pointed out that the impossibility of an outward action applies to the total being only, and not to the individual being, and that this excludes the parallel one mi ht be tempted to draw with the assertion, similar in appearance but without any metaphysical bearing, which the "monadism" of Leibnitz implies in regard to "individual substances".

[3] For the relationship between these symbolical flowers and the wheel regarded as a symbol of the manifested world, see *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. II.

numbers[1]. In any event, the unfolding in question can first of all be envisaged in the central plane, that is to say, in the horizontal plane of reflection of the " Celestial Ray ", as the integration of the corresponding state of the being ; but it will also extend outside that plane to the totality of the states, following the indefinite development, in all directions from the central point, of the universal spherical vortex which has already been described[2].

[1] It has already been stated that the number of spokes in the wheel varies from case to case ; the same is true of the petals of the emblematic flowers. The lotus has most frequently eight petals ; in western representations one often finds the numbers 5 and 6, which refer to the " microcosm " and the " macrocosm " respectively.

[2] On the part played by the " Divine Ray " in the realization of the being and the passage to the higher states, see also *L'Esotérisme de Dante*, ch. VIII.

CHAPTER XXV

The Tree and the Serpent

If we now return to the symbol of the serpent coiled round a tree, about which a few words were said earlier, it will be observed that this figure is exactly that of the helix traced round the vertical cylinder in the geometrical representation we have been studying. Since the tree symbolizes the "World Axis", as has been said, the serpent will depict the series of the cycles of universal Manifestation[1]; and this accounts for the fact that the traversing of the different states is represented in some traditions as a migration of the being in the body of a serpent[2]. As the traversing can be envisaged in two opposite directions, either upwards towards the higher states or downwards towards the lower, the two opposed aspects of the serpent symbolism, one beneficent and the other maleficent, thereby explain themselves[3].

[1] Between this figure and that of the *ouroboros*, i.e. the serpent that devours its own tail, there is the same connexion as between the complete spiral and the circular figure of the *yin-yang*, in which one of its coils taken separately is regarded as a plane; the *ouroboros* represents the indefinitude of a cycle considered in isolation. Such an indefinitude, for the human state, and owing to the presence of the temporal condition, assumes the aspect of "perpetuity".

[2] This symbolism is found for example in the Gnostic *Pistis Sophia*, in which the body of the serpent is divided according to the Zodiac and its subdivisions, which moreover brings us back to the figure of the *ouroboros*, for in these conditions all that can be in question is the course of a single cycle, through the diverse modalities of one and the same state; in this case, the migration envisaged for the being is therefore confined to the prolongations of the human individual state.

[3] Sometimes the symbol is doubled to correspond to these two aspects, and we then get two serpents coiled in opposite directions around a single axis, as in the figure of the caduceus. An equivalent of this is found in certain forms of the Brahmanic staff (*Brahma-danda*), where we find a double twining of lines which are placed in relation respectively with the two directions of rotation of the *swastika*. This symbolism has manifold further applications, which we cannot possibly go into here; one of the most important is that which relates to the subtle currents in the human being (see *Man and his becoming*, ch. XX): the analogy of the "microcosm" and the "macrocosm" is also valid from this particular point of view.

The serpent is found coiled not only round a tree, but also round a number of other symbols of the "World Axis"[1], and especially the mountain, as is seen in the Hindu tradition in the symbolism of the "churning of the sea"[2]. Here, the serpent *Shésha* or Ananta, representing the indefinitude of universal Existence, is coiled round the *Mêru*, the "polar mountain"[3], and is pulled in opposite directions by the *Dêvas* and the *Asuras*, who correspond respectively to the states that are higher and lower than the human; we thus obtain either the beneficent or the maleficent aspect, according to whether the serpent is regarded from the side of the *Dêvas* or that of the *Asuras*[4]. Again, if the meaning of the latter is interpreted in terms of "good" and "evil", we then get a clear correspondence with the two opposed sides of the "Tree of Knowledge" and the other similar symbols that have already been examined[5].

There is yet another aspect of the general symbolism of the

[1] For example, the *omphalos* and certain symbols of the "World Egg" (see *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. IX); in that connexion we have pointed out the relation that generally exists between the symbols of the tree, the stone, the egg, and the serpent.

[2] This symbolical account is to be found in the *Râmâyana*.

[3] See *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. IX.

[4] These two aspects can also be related to the two opposed meanings the word *Asura* can itself bear according to the way in which it is dissected: *asu-ra*, "life-giving"; *a-sura*, "non-luminous". Only in the latter sense are the *Asuras* opposed to the *Dêvas*, whose name expresses the luminosity of the celestial spheres; in the other sense, on the contrary, they are really identified with them (hence the application of the term *Asura*, in certain Vedic texts, to *Mitra* and to *Varuna*). Great care must be taken with this double meaning in order to resolve the apparent contradiction to which it may give rise.—If the symbolism of temporal succession is applied to the enchainment of the cycles, one readily appreciates why the *Asuras* are said to be prior to the *Dêvas*. It is at least curious to note that in the symbolism of the Hebrew *Genesis*, the creation of the vegetables before that of the heavenly bodies or "lights" may be connected with this priority; in fact, according to the Hindu tradition, the vegetable proceeds from the nature of the *Asuras*, i.e. the states lower than the human state, while the heavenly bodies naturally represent the *Dêvas*, i.e. the higher states. In this connexion it may be added that the development of "vegetative essence" in Eden is the development of the germs proceeding from the former cycle, and here the same symbolism also applies.

[5] In the temporal symbolism, there is also an analogy with the two faces of *Janus*, in so far as one of them is regarded as turned towards the future and the other towards the past. In another study we may one day show, more explicitly than has hitherto been possible, the profound connexion between all these symbols from different traditional forms.

serpent in which it appears, not precisely as maleficent (which necessarily implies the presence of the beneficent correlative, for "good" and "evil", like the two terms of any duality, can only be understood by reference to each other), but at any rate as to be dreaded, in so far as it represents the being's attachment to the indefinite series of cycles of manifestation[1]. This aspect belongs for instance to the function of the serpent (or the dragon which is then an equivalent of it) as the guardian of certain symbols of immortality, the approach to which it forbids. Thus we find it coiled round the tree with the golden apples in the garden of the Hesperides, or the beech tree in the wood at Colchis on which the Golden Fleece hangs; these trees are clearly further forms of the "Tree of Life", and accordingly they also represent the "World Axis"[2].

For the being to realize himself totally, he must escape this cyclic concatenation and pass from the circumference to the centre, in other words to the point where the axis meets the plane representing the state in which he is at present situated; the integration of this state having first been thus achieved, the totalization will thereafter take place, starting from that plane as basis, in the direction of the vertical axis. It should be noticed that while there is continuity between all states envisaged in their cyclic course, as was explained before, the passage to the centre essentially implies a discontinuity in the being's development; in this respect it may be compared to what from a mathematical standpoint is the "passage to the

[1] This is the Buddhist *samsâra*, the indefinite rotation of the "round of existence", from which the being must liberate himself in order to attain *Nirvâna*. Attachment to multiplicity is also, in one sense, the Biblical "temptation", which drives the being away from the original central unity and prevents him from attaining the fruit of the "Tree of Life"; and this is in fact precisely how the being is subjected to the alternation of the cyclic changes, i.e. to birth and death.

[2] From a viewpoint fairly close to the above, we must also mention the symbolic legends which in numerous traditions represent the serpent or dragon as the guardian of "hidden treasures"; the latter are connected with a number of other very important symbols, such as those of the "black stone" and the "subterranean fire" (see *Le Roi du Monde*, chs. I and VII); this is again one of the many points that can only be indicated in passing, though we may return to it again on another occasion (see also *The Reign of Quantity*, chap. XXII.—*Translator*.)

limit " of an indefinite series in continuous variation. In fact the limit, being by definition a fixed quantity, cannot as such be attained in the course of the variation, even if this is pursued indefinitely ; as the limit is not subject to the variation, it does not belong to the series of which it is the term, and one must go outside that series in order to reach it.[1] Similarly, it is necessary to go outside the indefinite series of manifested states and of their mutations in order to attain the " Invariable Middle ", the fixed and immutable point which commands movement without participating in it, just as the entire mathematical series, in its variation, is ordered by relation to its limit, which thus gives it its law but itself stands outside that law. Metaphysical realization cannot be carried out " by degrees ", any more than can the passage to the limit, or the integration which is really only a sort of particular case of it ; it is like a synthesis which cannot be preceded by any analysis, and in face of which all analysis would indeed be powerless and strictly nil in its results.

In the Islamic doctrine there is an interesting and important point in connexion with the above. The " straight path " (*es-sirâtul-mustaqîm*) which is spoken of in the *fâtihah* (literally " opening ") or first *sûrat* of the *Qoran*, is the same thing as the vertical axis taken in its upward direction, for its " uprightness " (identical with the *Te* of Lao-tze) must be envisaged in a vertical direction as is indicated by the root of the word that denotes it (*qām*, " to raise oneself "). Thus the meaning of the last verse, in which this " straight path " is defined as the " path of those on whom Thou pourest forth Thy grace, not that of those on whom Thine anger is, nor of those who are in error ". Those on whom the Divine " Grace "[2] is, are those who directly receive the influence of the " Activity of Heaven ", and who are led by it to the higher states and to total realization, since their being is in conformity with the universal Will. Again, " anger " being in direct opposition to " grace ", its

[1] For a full treatment of this question, see *Les principes du calcul infinitésimal*, ch. XXIV.—*Translator.*

[2] This " grace " is the " falling of dew " which, in the Hebrew *Qabbalah*, is placed in direct connexion with the " Tree of Life " (see *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. III).

action must also be exerted along the vertical axis, but with the opposite effect, which makes it travel downwards, towards the lower states[1]; this is the "infernal" way opposed to the "heavenly" way, and these two ways are the lower and upper halves of the vertical axis, starting from the level corresponding to the human state. Lastly, those who are in "error", in the proper etymological sense of the word, are those who, as is the case with the vast majority of men, drawn and held fast by multiplicity, err or wander indefinitely in the cycles of manifestation, represented by the convolutions of the serpent coiled around the "Tree in the Midst".[2]

In this connexion it should again be recalled that the proper meaning of the word *Islam* is "submission to the Divine Will"[3]; hence it is said, in certain esoteric teachings, that every being is *muslim*, in the sense that there is clearly none who can elude that Will, and accordingly each necessarily occupies the place allotted to him in the Universe as a whole. The division of beings into "faithful" (*mûminîn*) and "infidels" (*kuffâr*)[4] thus merely consists in the fact that the former consciously and voluntarily conform to the universal order, whereas among the latter there are some who obey the law only against their will, and others who are in pure and simple ignorance. Here again, then, are the three classes of

[1] This direct descent of the being down the vertical axis is represented by the "fall of the angels"; when human beings are involved, this can evidently correspond only to an exceptional case, and such a being is called *Waliyush-Shaytân*, because he is in a way the inverse of the "saint" or *Waliyur-Rahmân*.

[2] These three categories of beings might be denoted respectively the "elect", the "rejected" and the "gone astray"; it is worth remarking that they correspond exactly to the three *gunas*; the first to *sattwa*, the second to *tamas*, and the third to *rajas*.—Some exoteric commentators on the *Qoran* have maintained that the "rejected" were the Jews and the "gone astray" were the Christians; but this is a narrow interpretation, highly debatable even from the exoteric standpoint, and one that in any case has no sort of explanation according to the *haqîqah*.—On the subject of the first of the three categories here in question, it should be pointed out that the "Chosen One" (*El-Mustafa*) is, in Islam, a title applied to the Prophet, and, from the esoteric viewpoint, to "Universal Man".

[3] See *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. VI, where the close kinship of this word with those that denote "health" (or "salvation") and "peace" (*Es-salâm*) has been indicated.

[4] This distinction does not concern men alone, for the Islamic tradition applies it also to the *Jinn*; in reality, it is applicable to all beings.

beings that have just been envisaged; the "faithful" are those who follow the "straight path", which is the place of "peace", and their conformity to the universal Will makes them true collaborators in the Divine Plan.

CHAPTER XXVI

Incommensurability between the Total Being and the Individuality

It is now necessary to dwell on a point of the first importance. The traditional idea of the being, as set forth in this book, differs essentially and by its very principle from all the anthropomorphic and geocentric ideas which the western mentality finds so difficult to surmount. It might even be said to differ infinitely, and that would be no abuse of language such as occurs on most occasions when this word is used; on the contrary, it would be a more accurate expression than any other, and one better suited to the conception for which we use it, since this is truly unlimited. Pure metaphysic can in no wise admit anthropomorphism[1]; if the latter sometimes seems to find its way into metaphysical expression, that is only a quite outward appearance, and indeed one that is to some degree inevitable, because any expression necessarily involves the use of human language. The apparent fault, then, is only a consequence of the imperfection necessarily inherent in all expression, owing to its very limitation; such a consequence is admitted only by way of an indulgence, as it were, or a provisional and accidental concession to the feebleness of the individual human understanding, and its inability to attain to that which transcends the domain of the individuality. Even before any outward expression takes place, this insufficiency already reveals itself in formal thought (which indeed is itself an expression if considered in relation to the formless order): any idea that is thought of with intensity ends by adopting to some extent a human form, namely that of the thinker; to use a striking simile of Shankaracharya, it might

[1] On this subject, see *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines*, Part 2, chap. VII.

be said that " thought flows into man as molten metal is poured into the founder's mould ". The very intensity of the thought[1] makes it occupy the whole of the man, more or less as water fills a vessel to the brim ; it then assumes the shape of that which contains and limits it, in other words it becomes anthropomorphic. Here again there is an imperfection from which the individual being, under the restricted and particularized conditions of his existence can hardly escape ; indeed, in his individual capacity he cannot escape at all, though he is bound to strife towards doing so, for complete release from such limitation is obtained only in the extra-individual and supra-individual, that is, formless states, attained in the course of effective realization of the total being.

Now that this has been said in order to forestall any possible objection on the point, it is clear that there cannot be any common measure between the " Self ", on the one hand, and any individual modification, or even the integrality of a state, on the other. The " Self ", conceived as the totalization of the being, integrates itself by the three dimensions of the cross, and is finally reintegrated into its primal Unity, realized in that very plenitude of expansion of which space in its entirety is but a symbol. An individual human modification is represented by only an infinitesimal element of that space ; and even the integrality of a state, depicted by a plane (or at least by something regarded as a plane with the restrictions we have mentioned earlier), still implies only an infinitesimal element of three-dimensional space ; the reason is that when this representation is situated in space (that is, amid the array of all the states of the being), its horizontal plane must be regarded as in fact moving by an infinitesimal quantity along the vertical axis[2]. Since even this necessarily restricted and limited geometrical representation involves infinitesimal elements, it is

[1] Of course this word " intensity " should not be taken in a quantitative sense here. Moreover, since thought is not subject to the spatial condition, its shape is in no way " localizable " ; the order in which it is situated is the subtle, not the corporeal order.

[2] The question of the fundamental distinction between the " Self " and the " ego ", i.e. ul mately between the total being and the individuality, which was briefly summarized at the beginning of the present study, has been treated more fully in *Man and his becoming*, ch. II.

evident that between what is symbolized by the two terms that have just been compared, there is in actual reality and *a fortiori* an absolute incommensurability, not depending on any convention that is more or less arbitrary, as the choice of certain relative units must always be in ordinary quantitative measurements. Again, when the total being is in question, the indefinite is here taken as a symbol of the Infinite, in so far as it is permissible to say that the Infinite can be symbolized ; but naturally that in no wise amounts to confusing the two, as is not infrequently done by western mathematicians and philosophers. " If we can take the indefinite as an image of the Infinite, we cannot apply to the Infinite our reasonings about the indefinite ; the symbolism descends and does not re-ascend."[1]

This integration adds a dimension to the appropriate spatial representation. It is well known in fact that, starting from the line which is the first degree of indefinititude in extension, the single integral corresponds to the calculation of a surface, and the double integral to the calculation of a volume. Therefore, if a first integration has been required in order to pass from the line to the surface, which is measured by the two-dimensional cross describing the indefinite circle which never closes (or the horizontal spiral envisaged simultaneously in all possible positions), then a second integration is required in order to pass from the surface to the volume, in which the three-dimensional cross, by the irradiation of its centre throughout the directions of the space wherein it is situated, produces the indefinite spheroid, conceived as resulting from a vibratory-movement, or in other words the volume, open in all directions, that symbolizes the universal vortex of the " Way ".

[1] Matgioi, *La Voie Métaphysique*, p. 99.

CHAPTER XXVII

Place of the Individual Human State in the Being as a Whole

From what has just been said on the subject of anthropomorphism, it is clear that the human individuality, even when envisaged as an integral whole (and not restricted to the corporeal modality alone), cannot have a privileged and exceptional place in the indefinite hierarchy of states of the total being ; it occupies its place among them like any of the other states and by exactly the same right, neither more nor less, in conformity with the law of harmony that governs the relations of all the cycles of universal existence. This place is determined by the particular conditions that characterize the state in question and demarcate its domain. If we cannot at present know what it is, the reason is that we are not able, *quā* human individuals, to get outside these conditions so as to compare them with those of other states, the domains of which are necessarily beyond our reach. But it is obviously sufficient for us, always in our individual capacity, to be aware that this place is what it should be and cannot be other than it is, since each thing is strictly in the situation that it is bound to occupy as an element of the total order. Furthermore, by virtue of the same law of harmony that has just been alluded to, " the evolutive helix being regular everywhere and at all its points, the passage from one state to another takes place as logically and as simply as the passage from one position (or modification) to another within one and the same state "[1], without there being, at any rate from this point of view, the least break in continuity anywhere in the Universe.

[1] Matgioi, *La Voie Métaphysique*, pp. 96–97.

If we have had to make a reservation as regards continuity (without which universal causality could not be satisfied, demanding as it does that everything should be linked together uninterruptedly) the reason, as was indicated earlier, is that there exists (from a viewpoint other than that of the course of the cycles) a moment of discontinuity in the development of the being; this moment, which is absolutely unique in character, is that at which the action of the "Celestial Ray", operating on a plane of reflection, produces the vibration that corresponds to the cosmogonic *Fiat Lux* and illuminates by its irradiation the whole chaos of possibilities. From that moment, chaos is succeeded by order, darkness by light, potency by act, virtuality by reality; and when this vibration has attained its full effect in its amplification and reverberation to the utmost confines of the being, the latter, having thereupon realized its total plenitude, is obviously no longer bound down to passing through this or that particular cycle, since it now embraces them all in the perfect simultaneity of a synthetic and "non-distinctive" comprehension. This is what properly speaking constitutes "transformation", conceived as implying the "return of beings in modification into unmodified Being", outside and beyond all the special conditions that define the degrees of manifested Existence. "Modification", says the sage Shi-ping-wen, "is the mechanism that produces all beings; transformation is the mechanism in which all beings are absorbed."[1]

This "transformation" (in the etymological sense of passage beyond form), by which the realization of "Universal Man" is achieved, is the same thing as "Deliverance" (in Sanskrit *Moksha* or *Mukti*) of which we have spoken elsewhere[2]; it requires, before all else, the previous determination of a plane of reflection of the "Celestial Ray", so that the corresponding state thereby becomes the central state of the being. In principle, this can be any state whatever, since all are quite

[1] *Ibid.* p. 76—For the expression to be correct, it would here be necessary to substitute "process" for the altogether improper word "mechanism", borrowed rather unfortunately by Matgioi from Philastre's translation of the *Yi-king*.

[2] *Man and his becoming according to the Vedânta*, ch. XVII.

equivalent when envisaged from the Infinite ; and the fact that the human state is in no wise distinguished from the others implies, for it as well as for any other state, the possibility of becoming that central state. " Transformation " can therefore be attained from the human state as a basis, and even from any modality of that state, which amounts to saying that it is possible for corporeal man on earth ; in other words, " Deliverance " can be obtained " in life " (*jivan-mukti*)[1], and this does not prevent its essentially implying, for the being who obtains it during human life as in all other cases, absolute and complete release from the limiting conditions of all modalities and all states.

[1] *Ibid.* ch. XVIII.

As regards the actual process of development which allows the being, after passing through certain preliminary phases, to reach that precise moment when " transformation " takes place, we have no intention of speaking here, for it is plain that a description of it, even a summary one, cannot enter into the scheme of a work such as this, whose character must remain purely theoretical. All we have sought to do is to show what the possibilities of the human being are ; and these possibilities are necessarily possessed by the being in each of its states, for the states cannot differ in any way from one another in respect of the Infinite, in which Perfection resides.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Great Triad

If these latest considerations are set beside what was said at the beginning, it will readily be appreciated that the traditional idea of "Universal Man", despite the name, has absolutely nothing anthropomorphic about it. But, while all anthropomorphism is strictly anti-metaphysical and must be rejected as such, it remains to be shown in what sense and under what conditions a certain anthropocentrism may yet be regarded as legitimate[1].

In the first place, from the cosmic viewpoint mankind performs a "central" function in respect of the degree of Existence that it belongs to, but in respect of that degree alone, and not, of course, in respect of universal Existence, in which that degree is merely one among an indefinite multitude, with nothing entitling it to a special position as compared with the others. In this regard, then, there can be no question of anthropomorphism except in a restricted and relative sense, yet one sufficient to justify the analogical transposition of the idea of man which gives rise to the term "Universal Man".

From another viewpoint, it has been shown already that every human individual (or for that matter any manifestation of a being in any state) contains the possibility of making himself the centre in respect of the total being. Thus it can be said that he is the centre virtually, so to speak, and that the goal

[1] It must be added that this anthropocentrism has no necessary solidarity with geocentrism, despite the affinity which is found between them in certain "profane" conceptions. What might cause misunderstanding in this respect is that the earth is sometimes taken to symbolize the corporeal state in its entirety; but it is hardly necessary to say that earthly humanity is not the whole of humanity.

he must set before him is to turn that virtuality into a reality. Accordingly, even before such realization, and with a view to it, the being is entitled to place himself as it were ideally at the centre[1]. Since he is in the human state, his special perspective naturally endows that state with a preponderant importance which it cannot have from the standpoint of pure metaphysic; and this preponderance will be justified *a posteriori*, so to speak, in the case when the being, after taking the state in question as his starting-point and basis for realization, succeeds in really making it the central state of his totality, corresponding to the horizontal plane of coordinates in our geometrical representation. This implies, in the first place, that the being in question has been reintegrated into the centre of the human state itself (it is in this reintegration that the restitution of the "primordial state" consists), and thereafter that the centre of the human state itself has become identified, for this being, with the universal centre. In the first phase the integral human state is realized, in the second the totality of the being.

According to the Far-Eastern tradition, the "true man" (*Cheng-jen*) is he who, having realized the return to the "Primordial State", is thenceforth established for good in the "Invariable Middle", and thereby escapes from the vicissitudes of the "round of existence". Above this degree is that of "Divine man" (*Shen-jen*), who strictly speaking is no longer a man, because he has risen above humanity and is wholly emancipated from its specific conditions; he is one who has achieved total realization and attained the Supreme Identity, and such a one has therefore truly become 'Universal Man'. This cannot be said of "true man", yet he can be described as at least virtually Universal Man, in the sense that as he has no further states to go through in distinctive mode, because he has passed from the circumference to the centre, the human state will necessarily become, for him, the

[1] This is somewhat comparable with the way in which Dante, by a temporal and also non-spatial symbolism, places himself at the middle of the "great year" to accomplish his journey through the "three worlds" (see *L'Esotérisme de Dante*, ch. VIII).

central state of the total being, even though it is not yet so effectively[1].

It now becomes clear in what sense the middle term of the Great Triad envisaged by the Far-Eastern tradition should be taken; the three terms are "Heaven" (*T'ien*), "Earth" (*Ti*), and "Man" (*Jen*), with the third playing the part of "mediator" between the other two, uniting their two natures in himself. One may truly say, even of individual man, that he participates in "Heaven" and "Earth", which are identified with *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, the two poles of universal manifestation; but there is nothing here that is peculiar to the case of man, and one may say the same of any manifested being. In order that man may be effectively able to play the part in question in respect of universal Existence, he must have reached the point of situating himself at the centre of all things, in other words he must have attained at least the state of "true man"; even then, he will actually perform that function for one degree of Existence alone, and only in the state of "Divine man" is this possibility realized in its plenitude. This is tantamount to saying that the true "mediator", in whom the union of "Heaven" and "Earth" is fully accomplished by the synthesis of all the states, is Universal Man, who is identical with the Word; and, be it noted in passing, many aspects of the Western tradition, even from a purely theological standpoint, find here their deeper meaning.[2]

[1] The difference between these two degrees is the same as that between what has elsewhere been called virtual immortality and actually realized immortality (*Man and his becoming*, ch. XVIII): these are the two stages that we have distinguished from the outset in the realization of the Supreme Identity. In Arabic terminology, the equivalent of "true man" is "Primordial Man" (*El-Insânul-qadîm*), and that of "transcendent man" is "Universal Man" (*El-Insânul-Kâmil*).—For the relationship between "true man" and "Divine man" see *La Grande Triade*, ch. XVIII.

[2] The union of "Heaven" and "Earth" is the same thing as the union of the two natures, Divine and human, in the person of Christ, in so far as He is regarded as Universal Man. One of the ancient symbols of Christ is the six-pointed star, i.e. the double triangle of the Seal of Solomon (cf. *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. IV). In the symbolism of a Hermetic school to which St. Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas were attached, the upright triangle represents the Divinity, and the inverted one human nature ("made in the image of God", as His inverted reflection in the "mirror of the Waters"), so that the combination of the two triangles represents that

Again, as " Heaven " and " Earth " are two complementary principles, one active and the other passive, their union can be represented by the figure of the " Androgyne ", and this takes us back to what was said earlier in regard to Universal Man. Here again, every manifested being participates in the two principles and this is expressed by the presence of the two terms *yang* and *yin*, but in different proportions and always with one or the other predominating; the perfectly balanced union of the two terms can be realized only in the Primordial State[3]. As for the total being, there can no longer be any question of a distinction between *yang* and *yin*, which have then reentered the principial indifferentiation; accordingly, one can no longer even speak of the Androgyne, which already implies a certain duality in Unity itself, but only of a " neutrality " which is that of Being regarded in itself, beyond the distinction between " essence " and " substance ", " Heaven " and " Earth ", *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. Only in respect of manifestation, therefore, can the couple *Purusha-Prakriti* be identified,

of the two natures (*Lâhût* and *Nâsût* in Islamic esotericism). It should be observed, from the special viewpoint of Hermetism, that the human ternary " *spiritus, anima, corpus* " corresponds to the ternary of the alchemical principles " sulphur, mercury, salt ".—Again, from the standpoint of numerical symbolism, the Seal of Solomon is the figure of the number 6, which is the " conjunctive " number (the letter *vau* in Hebrew and Arabic), the number of union and mediation; it is also the number of creation and, as such, it also befits the Word " *per quem omnia facta sunt* ". The five- and six-pointed stars respectively represent the " microcosm " and the " macrocosm ", and also individual man (bound to the five conditions of his state, to which the five senses and the five corporeal elements correspond), and Universal Man or the *Logos*. The function of the Word, in respect of universal Existence, can also be specified by the addition of the cross traced within the figure of the Seal of Solomon; the vertical branch joins the apexes of the two opposed triangles, or the two poles of manifestation, and the horizontal branch represents the " surface of the Waters ". In the Far-Eastern tradition, we meet with a symbol which, while differing from the Seal of Solomon in arrangement, is numerically equivalent to it: six parallel strokes, complete or broken as the case may be (the sixty-four " hexagrams " of Wen-Wang in the *Yi-king*, each of them being formed by the superimposition of two of the eight *kua* or trigrams of *Fu-hsi*) constitute the " graphs of the Word " (in relationship with the symbolism of the Dragon): and they also represent " Man " as middle term of the Great Triad (the upper " trigram " corresponding to " Heaven " and the lower one to " Earth ", and this identifies them respectively with the upright and inverted triangles in the Seal of Solomon).

[3] For this reason the two halves of the *yin-yang*, by their union, constitute the complete circular form (which corresponds in the plane to the spherical form in three-dimensional space).

as was said earlier, with Universal Man[1]; and this is clearly the viewpoint from which the latter is the mediator between " Heaven " and " Earth ", for these two terms themselves disappear as soon as one passes beyond manifestation[1].

[1] What is here said about the true place of the Androgyne in the realization of the being, and of its relations with the Primordial State, explains the important part played by this idea in Hermetism, whose teachings relate to the cosmological domain, as well as to the extensions of the human state in the subtle order, i.e. in short to what may be called the " intermediary world ", which must not be confused with the domain of pure metaphysic.

[2] From this it is possible to understand the higher sense of the Gospel saying: " Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away ". The Word in itself and hence Universal Man, which is identical with It, is beyond the distinction between " Heaven " and " Earth ". It remains eternally such as it is, in the plenitude of Its Being, when all manifestation and all differentiation (i.e. the whole order of contingent existences) have vanished in the total " transformation ".

CHAPTER XXIX

Centre and Circumference

The foregoing by no means implies that space can be regarded as " a sphere which has its centre everywhere and its circumference nowhere ", to use the oft-quoted formula of Pascal, who indeed may not have been the first to use it. In any event, there is no need to discuss here what meaning Pascal himself attached to the phrase, which may have been wrongly interpreted. It matters little in any event, for it is clear that the author of the all-too-famous observations about the " two infinites ", despite his undeniable merits in other respects, did not possess any knowledge of a metaphysical order[1].

In the spatial representation of the total being, it is undoubtedly true that before any determination has been made, each point is potentially the centre of the being who is represented by the extension in which that point is situated ; but it is only potentially and virtually so, until the real centre has been actually determined. This determination implies that the centre is to be identified with the very nature of the principial point, which, in itself, is not properly speaking anywhere, since it is not subject to the spatial condition, and this allows it to contain all the possibilities of that condition. What are everywhere, then, in the spatial sense, are only the principial point's manifestations, which in fact fill space in its entirety, but are no more than mere modalities, so that " ubiquity " is really no more than a sensible substitute for true " omnipresence "[2]. Furthermore, if the centre of space endows as it

[1] A plurality of infinites is obviously impossible, for they would limit one another, so that none of them would really be infinite. Pascal, like many others, confuses the infinite with the indefinite, the latter being understood quantitatively and taken in the two opposing senses of increasing and decreasing magnitudes. (For further remarks on this point, see *Les principes du calcul infinitésimal*.—*Translator*).

[2] See *Man and his becoming*, ch. XXV.

were with its own nature all other points by the vibration it imparts to them, this is true only in so far as it makes them participate in the same indivisibility and freedom from conditions that it enjoys itself, and this participation, to the extent that it is effective, thereby frees these points from the spatial condition.

It is always desirable to bear in mind the general elementary law that between the fact or sensible object (ultimately the same thing) which is taken as a symbol, and the idea or rather metaphysical principle which it is desired to symbolize as far as that is possible, the analogy is always inverse[1]. Thus, in space considered in its existing reality, and not as a symbol of the total being, no point is or can be the centre ; all points equally belong to the domain of manifestation, by the very fact of belonging to space. Space is one of the possibilities whose realization falls within that domain, which, in its entirety, constitutes no more than the circumference of the " wheel of things ", or what might be called the outwardness of universal Existence. Again, of course, to speak here of " inward " and " outward ", of centre and circumference, is to use symbolical language, the language of spatial symbolism ; but the impossibility of doing without such symbols proves no more than the inevitable imperfection of our means of expression. If it is possible, up to a certain point, to communicate our ideas to others, in the manifested and formal world, it can obviously only be done through representations that manifest these ideas in certain forms, that is, by correspondence and analogies. This is the principle and final cause of all symbolism ; and every expression, whatever its mode, is in reality nothing but a symbol[2]. Only, " let us beware of confusing the thing (or idea) with the deteriorated form under which alone we can depict it, and perhaps even understand it (*quâ* human individuals) ; for the worst metaphysical (or rather, anti-metaphysical) errors have arisen from inadequate comprehension and wrong interpretation of symbols. And let us always

[1] In this connexion, compare what was said at the outset about the analogy between individual man and Universal Man.

[2] See *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines*, Part 2, ch. VII.

remember the god Janus, who is depicted with two faces, yet has only one, which is not either of those that we can touch or see "[1]. This image of Janus might be applied with exactitude to the distinction between "inward" and "outward", as well as to the consideration of the past and the future; and the single countenance, which no relative and contingent being can behold without first emerging from his limited condition, can correspond exactly to the third eye of *Shiva*, which sees all things in the "eternal present"[2].

Under these conditions, if our expression is to conform to the normal relationship of all analogies (which might well be described, in geometrical language, as a relationship of inverse homothesis), the formula of Pascal quoted above should and indeed, must, be reversed. It will then correspond to the Taoist text already quoted: "The point which is the pivot of the norm is the motionless centre of a circumference on the rim of which all contingencies, distinctions and individualities revolve"[3]. At first sight, it might almost be thought that the two images are comparable, but in reality they are the exact reverse of each other. Evidently Pascal let himself be carried away by his geometrician's imagination, which led him to reverse the true relationships as they should be envisaged from a metaphysical standpoint. It is the centre that is rightly speaking nowhere, because, as has been said, it is essentially "non-localized": it is not to be found anywhere in manifestation, since it is absolutely transcendent in respect thereof, while being at the centre of all things. It is beyond all that lies within the scope of the senses or any faculty proceeding from the sensible order; "The Principle cannot be attained by the eye nor the ear . . . The Principle cannot be heard; what is heard is not It. The Principle cannot be seen; what is seen is not It. The Principle cannot be stated; what is stated is not It . . . The Principle, being unimaginable, cannot be described either"[4]. All that can be seen,

[1] Matgioi, *Le Voie Métaphysique*, pp. 21–22.
[2] See *Man and his becoming*, ch. XX, *Le Roi du Monde*, ch. V, and *The Reign of Quantity*, p. 196.
[3] *Ch'uang-tzu*, ch. II.
[4] *Ibid.* ch. XXII—Cf. *Man and his becoming*, ch. XV.

heard, imagined, stated or described, necessarily belongs to manifestation, and even to formal manifestation; it is therefore really the circumference that is everywhere, since all places in space, or more generally, all manifested things (space being here only a symbol of universal manifestation), "all contingencies, distinctions and individualities", are only elements in the "stream of forms", points on the circumference of the "cosmic wheel".

Accordingly, to sum up in a few words, it can be said that, not only in space, but in all that is manifested, what is everywhere is the exterior or the circumference, whereas the centre is nowhere; since it is unmanifested; but (and here the expression "inverse sense" takes on the full force of its meaning) the manifested would be absolutely nothing without that essential point, which in itself is not manifested at all, and which, precisely by reason of its non-manifestation, contains in principle all possible manifestations, being the "motionless mover" of all things, the immutable origin of all differentiation and modification. This point produces the whole of space (as well as all other manifestations) by as it were issuing from itself and by unfolding its virtualities in an indefinite multitude of modalities, with which it fills space in its entirety; but when we say that it issues from itself to effect this development, such a very imperfect expression must not be taken literally. In reality, since the principial point is never subject to space, which it brings into existence, and since the relationship of dependence (or causal relationship) is obviously not reversible, this point remains "unaffected by the conditions of any of its modalities and consequently never ceases to be identical with itself. When it has realized its total possibility, it is only to come back (though the idea of "returning" or "beginning again" is in no way applicable here) to the "end which is identical with the beginning", that is, to the primal Unity which contains everything in principle, a Unity which, being Itself (considered as the "Self"), can in no wise become other than Itself (for that would imply a duality), and from which, therefore, when considered in Itself, It had never departed.

Further, so long as one is dealing with the being as such, and even with universal Being, all one can speak of is Unity, as we have been doing; but if it were sought to transcend the bounds of Being itself and to envisage absolute Perfection, then it would be necessary at the same time to pass beyond that Unity to metaphysical Zero, which cannot be represented by any symbolism, or named by any name.[1]

[1] See *Man and his becoming*, ch. XV.

CHAPTER XXX

Final Remarks on Spatial Symbolism

So far, no attempt has been made to draw a distinction between what is meant by "space" and "extension", respectively, and in many cases they have been used more or less as synonyms. The distinction between them, like that between "time" and "duration", may lend itself to philosophical subtleties, and may even have some real value from a cosmological point of view, but pure metaphysic is not really concerned with it.[1] Besides, in a general way, it is better to keep clear of any complications of language that are not strictly needed for clearness and accuracy of exposition. To use words which are not ours but which we can fully endorse, "we are reluctant to burden metaphysic with a fresh terminology, remembering that terminologies are subjects of discussion, error and discredit; those who create them, for the apparent needs of their demonstrations, incomprehensibly damage their texts by them, and become so wedded to them that often these dry, useless terminologies end up by constituting the sole novelty of the proposed system".[2]

Apart from these general reasons, if we have in fact often described as space that which is properly speaking only a

[1] While extension is usually regarded as a particularization of space, the relationship between time and duration is sometimes envisaged in the opposite sense; according to some conceptions, in fact, and notably those of the Scholastic philosophers, time is only a particular mode of duration; but this, though perfectly acceptable, has little bearing on the present subject. All that need be said is that the term "duration" is taken to denote any mode of succession in g eral, i.e. any condition which, in other stat of existence, may analogically correspond to what time is in the human state; but the use of the term is perhaps liable to give rise to confusion.

[2] Matgioi, *La Voie Métaphysique*, p. 33 (note).

particular three-dimensional extent, the reason is that, even at the highest degree of universalization of the spatial symbol that has been examined, we have not gone beyond the limits of that extent, which has been taken as giving a representation—necessarily imperfect—of the total being. Nevertheless, if one wished to keep to stricter phraseology, undoubtedly the word " space " should be used only to denote the sum total of all particular extensions. Thus, the spatial possibility, the " actualization " of which forms one of the special conditions of certain modalities of manifestation (such as our own corporeal modality, in particular) in the degree of existence that the human state belongs to, contains in its indefinitude all possible extensions, each of which is itself indefinite in a lesser degree, and which can differ from one another by their number of dimensions or by other features; again, clearly, the space known as " Euclidian ", which is studied in ordinary geometry, is only a particular case of a three dimensional extension, since it is not the only conceivable modality of it[1].

Despite this, the spatial possibility, even in all its generality, is still only one given possibility, indefinite no doubt, even indefinite to a multiple power, but none the less finite, because —as is shown in particular by the production of the series of numbers starting from unity—the indefinite proceeds from the finite, which means that the finite itself must potentially contain the indefinite. It is quite obvious that the greater cannot come out of the less, nor the Infinite out of the finite. Besides, were this not so, the coexistence of an indefinitude of other possibilities, which are not included in the spatial possibility[2], and each of which is equally capable of an indefinite development, would be impossible. This consideration alone, even failing any other, would fully suffice to prove the absurdity of the " infinite space " about which one

[1] The perfect logical consistency of the various " non-Euclidian " geometries is proof enough of this; but naturally this is not the place to stress the meaning and scope of these geometries, any more than those of " hypergeometry " or the geometry of more than three dimensions. (For this last point, see *The Reign of Quantity*, pp. 157–8 and 192–3.—*Translator*.)

[2] To keep to what is well known to all, ordinary thought itself, as envisaged by psychologists, is outside space and cannot in any way be situated in it.

has heard so much[1], for nothing can be truly infinite except that which comprehends all, and outside of which there is absolutely nothing that can limit it in any way whatsoever; in other words, total and universal Possibility.[2]

This brings us to the end of the present study, and we must hold over for another occasion an examination of the metaphysical theory of the multiple states of the being considered independently of the geometrical symbolism arising from it. We need only add the following, by way of conclusion. Through consciousness of the permanent Identity of Being throughout all the indefinitely multiple modifications of Existence, there is manifested, at the very centre of our human state, as well as at the centre of all other states, the transcendent and formless, and hence unincarnated and unindividualized element which is called the "Heavenly Ray". This consciousness is therefore higher than any formal faculty, which means that it is essentially supra-rational, and implies intuitive perception of the law of harmony which binds together and unites all things in the Universe; and for our individual being, but independently of it and of the conditions to which it is subject, this consciousness is no less than the "sense of eternity".[3]

[1] And equally, for that matter, of the "infinite number". In a general way, the alleged "quantitative infinite", in all its forms, is not and cannot be anything but purely and simply the indefinite. With that, all the contradictions inherent in this so-called infinite, which so greatly embarrass mathematicians and philosophers, disappear.

[2] While it is impossible, as was said earlier, to admit the narrow viewpoint of geocentrism, habitually bound up as it is with anthropomorphism, one cannot on that account think any the more highly of the sort of scientific or pseudo-scientific lyricism which seems so dear to the hearts of certain astronomers, and which is for ever speaking of "infinite space" and "eternal time". These expressions, let it be said again, are sheer absurdities, for the simple reason that nothing can be infinite but that which is independent of space and time. Ultimately what all this amounts to is another of the numerous attempts by the modern mind to restrict universal Possibility to the measure of its own capacities, which barely go beyond the bounds of the perceptible world.

[3] Needless to say, the word "sense" is not here taken in its proper meaning, but must be understood, by analogical transposition, to denote an intuitive faculty which grasps its object immediately, as sensation does in its order; but here there is all the difference which separates intellectual intuition from sense-intuition, the supra-rational from the infra-rational.

The cross is a symbol met with almost everywhere, and from the remotest times; it is therefore far from belonging exclusively to the Christian tradition which, at any rate in its outward and generally known aspect, seems to have lost sight of its symbolic character and to regard it as but the sign of a historical event. Actually, these viewpoints are in no wise mutually exclusive for the cross, like any other symbol, can be regarded according to manifold senses. The object before us however is the metaphysical sense; all other applications are secondary and contingent. If we do consider some of these it will be to attach them to the metaphysical order, for this is what gives them their value.

—*Condensed from the Preface*

[It was Guénon's task] to expound the universal metaphysical tradition that has been the essential foundation of every past culture, and which represents the indispensable basis for any civilization deserving to be so called.

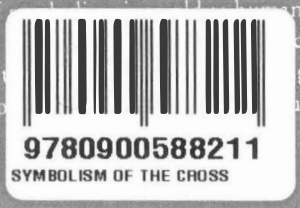
—A.K. Coomaraswamy

Guénon felt only too clearly his isolation from the prevailing mentality, but he also knew still more clearly the inability of the 'opposition' to gain final ascendency over the Truth. "All that we shall do or say," he wrote, "will amount to giving those who come afterwards facilities which we ourself were not given; hence, as everywhere else, it is the beginning of the work that is the most painful."

—Whitall Perry, in Guénon's *Fundamental Symbols [The Universal Language of Sacred Science]*

The universal language of [illegible] humanity; and the light which Guénon throws on the [illegible] ctual unanimity of the ancient world is enough t[illegible] g illusions about primitive man that we have sub[illegible] ir education.

—Martin Lings



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